THE Nation.

BRITAIN'S MIDSUMMER FEVER DREAM

Can a strong left arise from the chaos of Brexit, austerity, and the 2017 election?

John Harris

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Letters

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The Real Crime

The articles "Juvenile Lifers' Last Chance" and "Women Without Parole" in the July 3/10 issue broke my heart. I teach in Chester, Pennsylvania, one of the cities used in the past by big business, then left to deal with the subsequent poverty after being abandoned for another community. My students know people in prison, often family members. Many have been approached by gangs, and some actually assume they will end up in jail or dead at some point before age 20. It is so easy to blame kids for the neglect and violence dumped on them by adults. I cry out for the imprisoned souls we put away and would rather forget. Please follow up on this in future issues. Ruth Sheets
BROOKHAVEN, PENN.

Strunk & White's Rule 17: "Omit needless words." Maybe we should quit calling it the criminal-justice system and just call it the criminal system. Katharine W. Rylaarsdam
BALTIMORE

Reconstructing/Deconstructing

Naomi Klein wisely writes about the need to change the system rather than work within the neoliberal paradigm ["Daring to Dream in the Age of Trump," July 3/10]. Yet it's insufficient to say that Trump is simply the logical progression of a greedy culture dominated by the market and money. One might better say Trump partially represents the natural progression of a system in which political power builds on the accumulation of economic power.

In that same issue, D.D. Guttenplan writes that "our power comes not from…financial leverage" ["A Party for the People"]. But we must ask how we can systematically accumulate power if we neglect the logic of economic accumulation, i.e., control over technology, manufacturing, economic decision-making, and procurement power. Klein discusses "democratic worker co-ops as the centerpiece of a green jobs program" as well as "humanizing and democratizing new technologies and global trade." Yet larger movements of the left are far more concerned with personalities or identities than industrial policies, citizens' banks, or consumption networks that might promote economic democracy. Economic democracy is clearly a dependent variable, dependent on various strategies which the larger movements of the left are not very interested in. Rather, the left has helped sustain the very silo politics Klein criticizes.

Thus, deconstructing Trump and market-driven shocks won't be enough for a left revival. Rather, we have to deconstruct the left as well and how it has failed to integrate political, economic, and media power.
Jonathan Michael Feldman
STOCKHOLM, SWEDEN

Naomi Klein suggests that the Trump presidency represents the culmination of a flawed right-wing American mind-set so misguided that it may serve to shock America into a more progressive viewpoint, as evidenced by the growing currency of progressive demonstrations and ideas. She is probably right in the long run, but the long run is only just beginning. A majority of electors in the Electoral College voted for Trump; very close to a majority of voters voted for him as well.

Klein's article implicitly raises the left's eternal question: "What is to be done?" Yes, there is widespread advocacy of once-forbidden progressive ideas. But the many groups involved are separated by individual leadership egos and differing strategies and tactics. Are these groups also separated by differing objectives? Not so much.

letters@thenation.com

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McConnell's Coup

So far, the Affordable Care Act has proved a remarkably durable piece of legislation. It's survived a flubbed rollout, uncooperative state lawmakers, two Supreme Court challenges, more than 50 repeal votes in the House, and multiple attempts to replace it since Republicans took control of Congress and the White House. Whether it survives Mitch McConnell's extraordinary legislative coup is, as of press time, anybody's guess. On July 25, the Senate majority leader squeaked through a motion to begin debate on a bill that will impact tens of millions of Americans and one-sixth of the US economy. How so? Nobody knows exactly—because the bill hasn't been written yet.

What emerges from the negotiations to follow could be a repeal-only bill favored by conservatives like Rand Paul and Ted Cruz, which would strip health coverage from 32 million Americans and double premiums within a decade. Or it could be a so-called "skinny repeal" that eliminates the individual mandate while ducking issues like cuts to Medicaid that have turned off moderates. Most likely, if anything passes the Senate at all, it will be larded with amendments designed to buy off both factions, all written behind closed doors, without markups, hearings, or input from Democrats. To repeal (and replace) Obamacare, McConnell still has a narrow path to tread, but he has correctly identified that the only road to victory lies through chaos, secrecy, and panic.

Even without any legislative action, those will be the instruments the Trump administration uses to cripple the Affordable Care Act behind the scenes. "We'll let Obamacare fail, and then the Democrats are going to come to us," Trump told reporters last week. "Let Obamacare fail" really means *make it fail*—a strategy the White House has been flirting with for months. In April, Trump threatened to cut off the payments to insurers (known as cost-sharing reductions) that help to lower out-of-pocket costs for lower-income people. If he does so now, insurers will either raise premiums or exit the market completely. Trump could also choose not to enforce the tax penalties for people who forgo insurance, or to refuse to advertise enrollment periods, both of which would destabilize markets even further.

Yes, the ACA's individual marketplaces are already unstable in some areas. There may be no insurers offering plans in more than three dozen counties in Indiana, Nevada, and Ohio next year. Premiums are expected to rise. But a more basic problem is that the people now overseeing Obamacare would like to see it fail—specifically Health and Human Services Secretary Tom Price and the administrator of the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, Seema Verma. Both trumpet every piece of bad news about the "collapsing" markets, while doing nothing to prop them up. Insurers themselves have explained that the Trump administration's actions (or lack thereof) are one of the primary reasons for instability and premium hikes.

Outside the White House, a collapse of the repeal effort may make a few Republicans more willing to consider improving Obamacare. To that end, Congress could permanently fund cost-sharing reductions to insurers, boost reimbursements to insurers for high-costs patients, and fix other small glitches in the law. It could also create a public option to boost competition in the Obamacare market, though that's obviously a far heavier lift.

For activists working to preserve Obamacare, the main priority now is to expose the Republican leadership's machinations and to mobilize massive public pressure against any repeal effort. "As long as Mitch McConnell is the majority leader, we're not going to take anything for granted," said Angel Padilla, the policy director for Indivisible. Padilla said he won't feel certain that repeal is off the table until Republicans start working in earnest to strengthen Obamacare via bipartisan legislation. Even then, he warned, advocates should be wary of harmful amendments and a continued assault on Medicaid.

Also on the horizon is the ongoing struggle to expand Medicaid in the 19 states that have not done so. According to the Kaiser Family Foundation, about 4.5 million people would gain coverage if

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QC BY THE NUMBERS

63%
Russian citizens who view the United States as the primary threat to their national security

0
Democratic senators who oppose new aggressive sanctions against Russia

485K
People who would be killed instantly if a Russian nuclear warhead was dropped on the center of Washington, DC

1.4M
People who would be killed instantly if a US nuclear warhead was dropped on the center of Moscow

—Jake Bittle

"We should be debating how many sanctions we should place on Russia, or whether we should blow up the KGB...."

Paul Begala, Democratic adviser to Bill Clinton, in a CNN interview

those states decided to expand their programs. In March, Kansas's Republican-controlled Legislature approved the expansion, though it was vetoed by Governor Sam Brownback. Maine residents will vote on an expansion referendum in November. In North Carolina, the Democratic governor and Republican Legislature are locked in a fierce standoff over the issue.

Then there's the brewing push from the left for universal coverage through a Medicare-for-all system. Al Gore, hardly a fringe figure, recently endorsed the idea, and Senator Bernie Sanders is set to introduce legislation to that end in the coming weeks. A new Pew survey finds that public support for such a system has steadily grown, even as Republicans have repeatedly tried to ram through an Obamacare repeal. Some 60 percent now say the federal government is responsible for providing health care to all Americans. In their craven and anti-democratic putsch against an increasingly popular program, Republicans may have awakened a formerly silent majority—one that will not only defend the current law, but rally around the simple principle that health care is a right for all, and not a privilege for the few.

Realism on Russia

The moment calls for diplomacy and dialogue.

The revelation that Donald Trump Jr. met with a Russian lawyer promising derogatory information on Hillary Clinton reaffirms the need for a full accounting of how our democracy may have been subverted in the 2016 election. Special counsel Robert Mueller's investigation into the claims of Russian interference in the election, of collusion with the Trump campaign, and the possibility of criminal malfeasance by President Trump or his associates is essential, and it must be allowed to reach its own conclusions without interference from the White House. Beyond protecting this existing investigation, Democrats should seek an independent commission to lay out steps for protecting the integrity of future elections.

None of this should be controversial. At the same time, there is another set of facts that needs to be reckoned with in this precarious moment—facts concerning the abject failure of US policies toward Russia and the dangerous path down which our two countries are currently headed. These facts also concern real and present threats and cannot be ignored. Indeed, the crisis we are now facing makes clear that it's time to fundamentally rethink how we approach our relationship with Russia.

We simply cannot afford a revival of the Cold War.

As US-Russian relations have deteriorated, the risk of a nuclear catastrophe—including the danger posed by a nuclear-armed North Korea—has risen to its highest level since the end of the Cold War. The *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* now rates the danger higher than when the Soviet Union tested its first nuclear device, in 1949. The new Cold War is punctuated by perilous military face-offs in three arenas: in Syria, in the skies over the Baltic Sea; on Russia's western border, with 300,000 NATO troops on high alert and both Russia and NATO ramping up deployments and exercises; and in Ukraine. Between them, the United States and Russia possess nearly 14,000 nuclear weapons—more than 90 percent of the world's nuclear arsenal—and keep almost 2,000 of them on hair-trigger alert. So the extreme danger of nuclear war can only be reduced through cooperation between our two countries.

At the same time, the era of cyberwarfare has arrived without any of the agreed-upon rules that govern traditional war or, for that matter, nuclear deterrence. There is now a rising threat of hackers breaching not only e-mails and elections but also power grids, strategic warning systems, and command-and-control centers. For years, there has been discussion of the need to establish clear rules of the road for cyberwarfare. Now, reports of escalating interference make it imperative that cyberweapons, like conventional, chemical, and nuclear arms, ought to be controlled by means of a binding, verifiable treaty. Again, however, this cannot happen without a more constructive US-Russia relationship.

COMMENT

Given these significant threats, the escalation of tensions with Russia serves neither the national interest nor our national security. Expanding sanctions will only drive a wedge between the United States and the European Union, spur Russia to take retaliatory measures, and make it more difficult to negotiate. This moment calls for diplomacy and dialogue, not moral posturing and triumphalism.

Needless to say, rebuilding a working détente with Russia won't be easy. It will take skill and persistence. Russian President Vladimir Putin heads an authoritarian government that tramples on basic rights. Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014 was a violation of international law, and Putin has responded to US and NATO deployments on Russia's borders by reinforcing his country's own forces, including more nuclear-capable missiles, thereby increasing the risk of accident, miscalculation, and escalation. Meanwhile, President Trump has demonstrated that he has neither the temperament nor the advisers to sustain a coherent policy initiative. It is hard to see how we get from here to there, but we come to negotiations with the governments we have, not the ones we wish we had. There is simply no other choice.

For Democrats whose understandable desire to resist Trump has helped fuel the anti-Russia fixation, there is also another reality to consider. Focusing on Trump's ties to Russia alone will not win the crucial 2018 midterm elections, nor will it win meaningful victories on issues like health care, climate change, and inequality that affect all of our lives. Moreover, cold wars are lousy for progressivism: They strengthen war parties, fatten defense budgets, and deplete funds that could be put to better use rebuilding infrastructure and expanding social programs. They empower the worst forces in politics and close off space for dissent. This is as true in the United States as it is in Russia. In its 152 years, *The Nation* has witnessed how

(continued on page 8)

THE SCORE/BRYCE COVERT + MIKE KONCZAL

A Battle for Fair Rates

We recently marked the seventh anniversary of the Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act, President Obama's response to the 2008 financial crisis. President Trump and the Republicans are hard at work trying to undermine it, but there is one interesting element they're having trouble weakening: credit-card reform. It's a small part of the act, but an important one to understand, because it can serve as a model for fixing some of the more abusive parts of our economy.

When businesses choose to accept credit and debit cards, they must pay an "interchange fee" to the credit-card companies. This is a big cost for them. For a long time, credit-card companies, which are near monopolies, forced businesses to accept their terms: high rates, no minimums allowed, no discounts for people paying in cash, and more. This particularly affected poor people because they pay in cash and had to shell out more to cover the higher prices caused by card use.

Dodd-Frank changed all this. It said that interchange fees must be "reasonable and proportional" to the costs incurred for the cards. (The Fed interpreted this to mean that the fee must be, at maximum, "21 cents plus 0.05 percent multiplied by the value of the transaction, plus a 1-cent fraud-prevention adjustment, if eligible.") It also opened up the network for competition and allowed merchants and businesses to set minimums and offer discounts for using cash. In other words, the government intervened directly and told monopolistic credit-card companies what rates they could set and what rules they would play by.

How simple and straightforward is that? This immediately solved several problems at once. It moved power from the too-powerful financial sector to the real economy of sellers and buyers. Local small businesses now have more control over the terms under which they'll accept payments, rather than having those terms forced on them by faraway credit conglomerates. And it also simplifies regulatory enforcement.

This same spirit lies behind net neutrality, another important legacy of the Obama era that is now under attack. Net neutrality is the simple idea that Internet service providers should treat all of the traffic passing over their networks equally. As with Dodd-Frank, it allows the government to set a rate: All digital traffic must be allowed to travel over Internet infrastructure for the same cost. It doesn't allow the market to set rates, and this benefits the whole economy.

This type of regulation—setting fair rates and opening up closed networks to competition, taking these decisions out of the private market—is traditionally known as "public utility" regulation. For years, policy-makers have naively assumed that market competition would break up significant concentrations of economic power. But as the economy has become more concentrated and monopolies have grown, market competition has proved a weak mechanism for protecting the public interest.

The notion of public utility was essential to the nation's first wave of reforms, from the Gilded Age to the New Deal.

The legal historian William Novak notes that the notion of public utility was essential to the nation's first wave of reforms, from the Gilded Age to the New Deal. An 1877 Supreme Court case, *Munn v. Illinois*, determined that the government could regulate businesses "affected with a public interest," including the railroads, telephone and telegraph companies, utilities, and banking. Years later, during the New Deal, Justice Felix Frankfurter noted that the existence of a public interest "made possible, within a selected field, a degree of experimentation in governmental direction of economic activity of vast import and beyond any historical parallel."

Liberals need to embrace these arguments in the 21st century, especially as Democrats look to tackle concentration and corporate power, and encourage the government to directly intervene to set rates in areas of public interest. "All-payer rate setting," for example, would mean that everyone pays the same price for the same services in health care. Looking at the increasing centrality of major tech companies in our day-to-day lives, we will need the government to instruct them not to discriminate and to protect their customers' data. These will be difficult fights, but we already have a proud history of regulation that need only be brought into a new era. **Mike Konczal**

What? Something in Government Still Works.

A tiny anti-monopoly "public utility" regulation keeps credit-card companies in line.

Here's how:

1 To accept debit cards, businesses had to pay credit-card companies huge "interchange" fees.

$16.2 billion
paid in 2009 interchange fees for
37.6 billion
debit/prepaid card transactions

2 This caused businesses to raise prices, and poor people got gouged.

3 A Dodd-Frank rule now lets government control these fees.

Average interchange fee dropped
14 cents
per charge

4 So more money stays with small businesses, workers, and consumers.

$8.4 billion
kept from credit-card companies in 2015 thanks to Dodd-Frank.

Sources: Federal Reserve, author's calculation, the Hispanic Institute
2017 Infographic: Tracy Matsue Loeffelholz
Image: Seshkin, merrilu/Shutterstock

2018

House Cleaning

Even as the Democratic Party's leadership experiments with new platforms and branding messages, the resisters at the bottom have turned their political rage into fuel. According to the Brookings Institution, as of June 30, more than 200 Democratic challengers have filed with the Federal Election Commission—and raised at least $5,000 apiece—in an effort to unseat Republican incumbents in the House of Representatives. This is by far the largest number of challengers in well over a decade. The last time that Democrats filed to run in higher-than-average numbers this early was in 2007—but by that point, the party had already gained control of the House. Many observers point to the widespread disdain for Trump and his GOP enablers as the reason behind the surge, but it's still too early to predict a Democratic groundswell in 2018. Only time will tell if the army of resisters can prove successful in the face of voter-suppression tactics, Russian hacking, and well-funded incumbents backed by the Koch brothers and other deep-pocketed donors on the right.

—Elizabeth Adetiba

Katha Pollitt

42 Months to Go...

Rage, depression, and despair abound on the left—along with glimmers of hope.

We're six months into the Trump era—and how are you today? I've mostly stopped feeling shocked that Donald Trump is the president. I've also stopped daydreaming that I live in a parallel universe where the person with the most votes wins—because that would be too weird. My husband and I made a rule that we couldn't talk about Trump after 10 PM, because we were obsessing so much we couldn't sleep. It was hard at first, but these days we mostly keep to it ("We do not!" he says). For a while, I felt discouraged and stopped going on marches and calling Congress. I found it hard to concentrate on the news or, indeed, much of anything. But now I'm back to ringing up my representatives and reading *The Washington Post*. I'm donating a lot too, even to candidates that have no real chance of winning.

I know I'm supposed to get out of my bubble, so last weekend I had a long talk with a very conservative Trump supporter in upstate New York. He's a lovely guy who just happens to have his own set of facts. In his world, there are plenty of jobs but people won't take them; 35 to 40 percent of people on Medicaid are defrauding the government; and high taxes and regulations have destroyed the economic viability of agriculture in upstate New York. The free market would solve all our problems—supply and demand! Mostly I just listened and asked questions, but we did find common ground in concluding that human beings are mostly terrible and maybe we should concentrate on saving wildlife. "Like big game—elephants and tigers," he said wistfully. "Soon they'll all be gone." I thought of mentioning those noted safari hunters Eric and Don Jr., but why spoil the moment?

I checked in with my Upper West Side "Huddle"—an outgrowth of the Women's March—and many said their primary feeling was depression. "Seems like every day there are new revelations that only reinforce Trump's narcissistic dishonesty and lack of humanity, and I cannot begin to understand how anyone could continue to support him," wrote my neighbor Tina. "Every day seems to get worse and more unreal," reported Eileen, who says she suffers from "protest fatigue." My friend Katherine wrote, "Primarily, just depressed. Secondarily, in continuous and ever escalating disbelief. How could anyone be as stupid as Trump has been?"

Shari, by contrast, is a dervish of activism. She and her husband built and maintain the website for NY Indivisible. "Also, several of us splintered off into our own group that aims to combat resistance fatigue by creating art and live-music events to raise money and awareness for various causes," Shari said. "Since I also do a lot of the graphic-design work for NYI, whenever I get anxious about a topic, I just make art about it. Needless to say, I've made a lot of art."

Women, according to one survey, are way overrepresented in the resistance, but in my own unscientific survey of friends and correspondents, they seem particularly harrowed, anxious, and sad. Hilary Bok, a brilliant philosopher engaged for decades in social-justice work, described herself as "Worn down, bewildered, exhausted, distractible.... The realization that Trump could actually become president was just profoundly shocking to me," she added, "not only because he's a racist, xenophobic, sexist boor, but because I honestly could not see how people could support him unless the entire idea that political candidates should have some qualification for office other than pissing off liberals had gone by the boards altogether."

"My experience of fighting against the Trump admin reminds me of when I was raped in my early 20s," wrote a Facebook friend. "I just couldn't believe that all of my struggling and fighting wasn't enough to save me.... My attacker was simply stronger and more powerful than I was."

One friend reports that she is in a state of "continuous and ever escalating disbelief. How could anyone be as stupid as Trump has been?"

Of course, plenty of (white) women are delighted with Trump—remember that feeling, ladies, when you can't get an appointment at Planned Parenthood because the man you voted for has closed it down. But for feminists, Trump's triumph is yet more proof that there is no penalty for misogyny and that the least qualified man can beat the most qualified woman. "Living under this

LEFT: SIPA VIA AP IMAGES; ILLUSTRATION: ANDY FRIEDMAN

"Vote, write, speak, work, march, sue, organize, fight, struggle—whatever it takes to secure the blessings of liberty."

—Molly Ivins

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president as a woman is so fucking degrading," wrote former *Nation* contributor Michelle Goldberg, now reporting at *Slate*. "It's an insult that I'm basically aware of every waking moment; it poisons every day."

"We need to support each other. We need to be kind and decent to each other, too, across many personal and political divides."

But not everyone is walking around in a cloud of rage and foreboding. While some feel their life's work has been rendered meaningless, others are springing out of bed full of hope. "I am more determined than depressed," wrote my neighbor Karen, who's more enthusiastic about the Working Families Party and MoveOn than about the Dems. "I take a renewed sense of urgency to all my work now," wrote journalist Mark Oppenheimer. "The United States may have a terrible executive branch, but my hometown of New Haven doesn't. Whenever I worry that freedoms could be corroded here the way they have been in Hungary or Poland, I think: wait, would the people on my street, or on my block, allow that? I don't think they would."

No doubt the doughty citizens of New Haven will prove equal to the challenge, but Washington may already be a lost cause. Writes one DC-based journalist: "Watching so many people I know morph from 'obviously, I can't support Trump,' to 'of course I'll help Trump confirm birthers to the federal bench' has whittled down my friend list.... There are old friends I have not spoken to since November 8 and never will speak to again."

Did I glean anything useful from this mélange of views? Energy and optimism are finite resources, it's clear, so I'm taking a pledge to shun stupid fights with people I agree with politically 95 percent of the time. As University of Chicago policy wonk Harold Pollack put it, "We need to support each other. We need to be kind and decent to each other, too, across many personal and political divides. We are going to defeat Trump, if he doesn't defeat himself first. But this race is not a sprint. It's a long-distance run." ■

(continued from page 4)

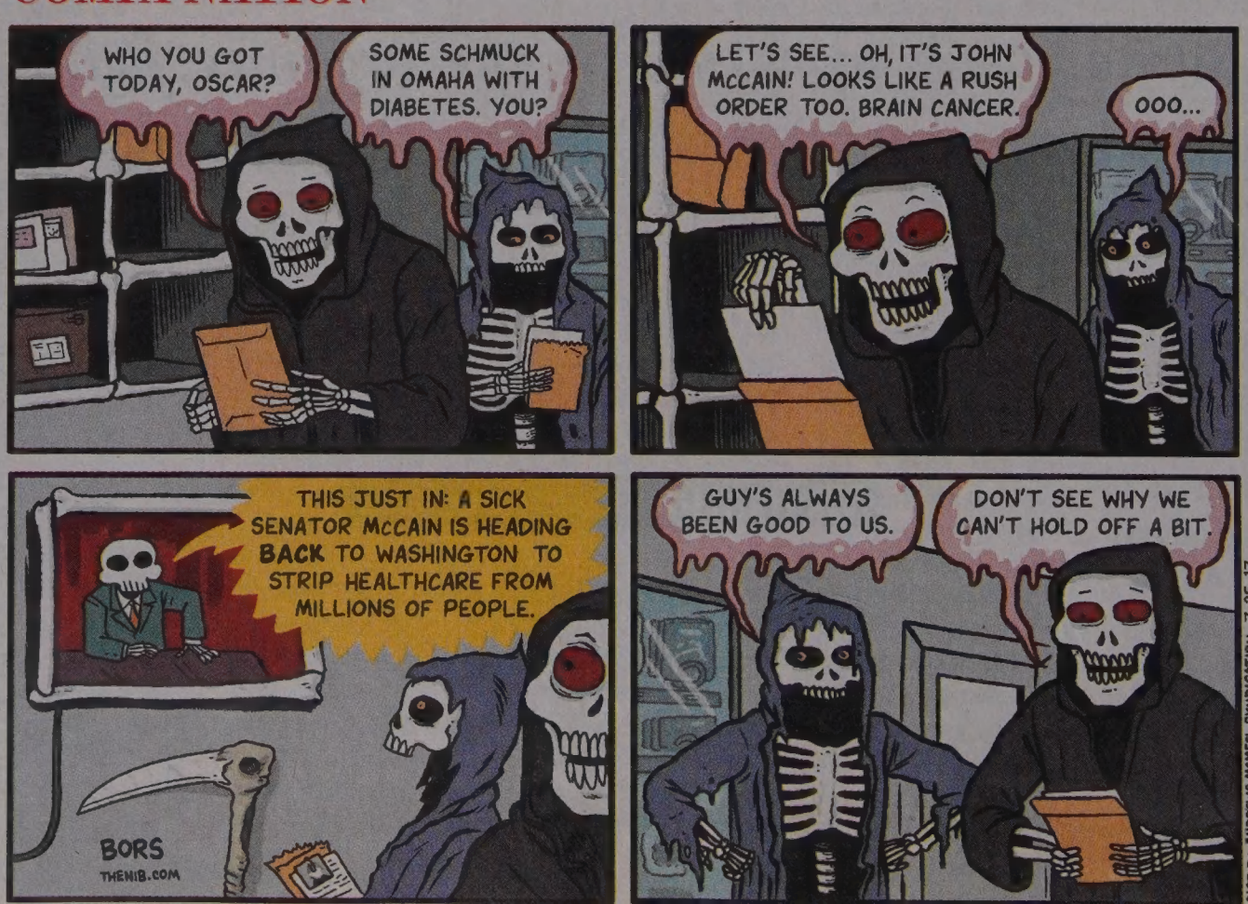
war fever is used to trample rights here at home. And, having worked with Russian dissidents, journalists, and feminist NGOs for three decades, I have seen personally how a cold war can be used to suppress independent voices in that country.

The bottom line is that opposition to Trump cannot become the same as opposition to common sense. Common sense dictates that we protect our own democracy by strengthening our election systems to counter outside interference. It dictates an independent investigation into claims of Russian meddling in the presidential campaign. But it also tells us that we cannot address many of our most urgent challenges—from Syria, to climate change, to nuclear proliferation and cyberwar—without the United States and Russia finding ways to work together when it serves our mutual interests. We do not have to embrace the Russian government to work on vital interests with it. And we cannot afford a revival of Cold War passions that would discredit those seeking to de-escalate tensions. Efforts to curtail debate could be a disservice to our country's security.

As editor of *The Nation*, a magazine with a long history of adopting alternative views and unpopular stances, especially on matters of war and peace, I believe it's important to challenge the conventional wisdom; to foster, not police, debate; and to oppose the forces that vilify those advocating and pursuing better relations. Also, while it may not be popular to insist that both the United States and Russia have serious interests in maintaining a working relationship, it also isn't radical. It is simply sober realism. KATRINA VANDEN HEUVEL

COMIX NATION

MATT BORS


WHO YOU GOT TODAY, OSCAR?
SOME SCHMUCK IN OMAHA WITH DIABETES. YOU?
LET'S SEE... OH, IT'S JOHN MCCAIN! LOOKS LIKE A RUSH ORDER TOO. BRAIN CANCER.
OOO...
THIS JUST IN: A SICK SENATOR MCCAIN IS HEADING BACK TO WASHINGTON TO STRIP HEALTHCARE FROM MILLIONS OF PEOPLE.
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TRUMPED

Unintended Results

Even as President Trump struggles to obtain funding for one of his biggest campaign promises—a $21 billion border wall—his tough talk on immigration has not gone unnoticed in Latin America. According to *The New York Times*, detainments along the southwest US border have dropped by 60 percent in the first four months of Trump's presidency, compared with the same period last year. Many would-be migrants are now staying put, citing a fear of "what's happening" under Trump. If history is any indication, however, the problem may only get worse. MS-13, one of Central America's most notorious gangs, blossomed after the Clinton administration deported thousands of criminals to El Salvador at the turn of the century. The country has since become one of the deadliest in the world, contributing to an exodus of unaccompanied minors to the United States in 2014.

—Miguel Salazar

Kai Wright

The Damage Done

Many of the systems we depend on won't survive the Trump era intact.

Liberals have an unbecoming habit of dismissing Republican presidents as too dim-witted and disengaged to occupy the Oval Office. Democratic voters like to believe their politicians are brighter, more truthful, simply more prepared to lead—and Donald Trump is hardly the first right-winger to snatch power while defining himself against this smarter-than-thou liberalism.

George W. Bush was mocked as a frat boy who basically inherited the White House thanks to his family connections—and then his administration invented the permanent war and gave away so many hundreds of billions of dollars in tax revenue that the federal government couldn't function. Ronald Reagan came off as a dopey B-movie actor merely playing the role of commander in chief—and then he set the terms of political debate for a generation. No one should presume that Trump's cartoonish ignorance will continue to constrain his presidency.

Of course, an important difference here is basic competence. Trump has surrounded himself with people who are as plainly unqualified for their jobs as he is. The disregard for expertise was too much even for Sean Spicer, who reportedly quit after Trump asked him to work for Anthony Scaramucci, a Wall Street financier with zero experience running a communications operation of any size. Important roles in several agencies remain unfilled, and the Trump team's increasing legal troubles will only make this staffing problem more acute. Ideology aside, people qualified to hold the most crucial positions in government are smart enough to turn them down at this moment. Nobody wants an audience with Robert Mueller's investigators.

And yet none of this dooms Trump's agenda, which is fundamentally one of destruction. It is disturbingly easy to break stuff, and incompetence is a powerful tool. That's especially true now, when so many of the systems that govern our lives—schools, infrastructure, housing, immigration—are already collapsing from neglect. It's hard to imagine they'll survive the Trump era intact; some came into it broken.

So the progressive imperative is not only resistance, but creation in the face of destruction. Not everything Trump wants to destroy needs saving: The free-trade deals and neocon foreign policy he once decried have made the world poorer and less safe. We'd do well to end both. But on just about everything else, we'll need to rebuild.

Health care is as good an example as any. Thus far, Senate majority leader Mitch McConnell and House Speaker Paul Ryan have failed in their efforts to get rid of Medicaid (primarily because they can't find a fig leaf of "reform" big enough to cover up their true intent). But Trump has vowed to simply break the Affordable Care Act and leave it at that. He has a really good chance of succeeding. In fact, he's already doing it.

The president loves to point out that premiums have gone up and insurers are pulling out of the individual markets. Sure, but why? For two important reasons. First, because millions of sick people are finally getting access to care. Insurers can no longer just refuse to cover people who actually need insurance, and they're trying to find a new way to make money. This is actually a good thing—we need health-insurance companies to make money if they're going to stay in the exchanges. Federal subsidies cover those costs for the vast majority of consumers. Moreover, claims data for the first quarter of 2017 suggest the influx of sick patients that Obamacare invited into the system has leveled off. As all those sick people get healthy, costs should go down—if the markets are properly regulated.

Trump's agenda is fundamentally one of destruction. It is disturbingly easy to break stuff, and incompetence is a powerful tool.

Which they won't be, under Trump. That's the second reason the individual markets are in turmoil: Congress and the president have created chaos. At least one reason insurers have fled the markets is Trump's repeated threat to cut federal payments that help cover the costs of their poorest, sickest customers. Several counties in Ohio and Nevada are in danger of having no insurers in their exchanges next year.

Obamacare has worked, at least on its own terms: It has cut the ranks of the uninsured by al-

ILLUSTRATION: ANDY FRIEDMAN

most half. But it has done so using a market-based system built on a shaky foundation that requires Washington's active support to function. It is complicated to a fault, and even without Trump's hostility, nothing about this administration suggests that it has the capacity to successfully manage the Affordable Care Act into maturity.

So the repeal-and-replace debate is just a prelude to the real reckoning that will be forced by Trump's destructive incompetence. A market-based system that depends on employers to help pay off insurers will necessarily leave out tens of millions of Americans; the problem will worsen as more employers refuse to offer benefits (or, in the tech sector, even to acknowledge that they are employers). Obamacare found a way for the federal government to pay the bill for many of those left out, but it's unsustainable without close support and guidance. So what comes next? What's the road out of the shambles that Trump will leave behind and into a Medicare-for-all model? This is the sort of creative work to which we must turn.

Similar reckonings loom across the federal government. Immigration is the other obvious example. It's not just the deportation pipeline; millions of families are stuck in the hellish stasis of our outdated system for legal immigration, and Trump's promised harassment of immigrants will force us to face the gap between our values and our laws. So what's a functioning, ethical immigration system in a world in which capital moves freely and quickly across national borders?

Trump will continue to defy prediction, because he has no strategy beyond compulsive reaction, no goals beyond self-aggrandizement. But one thing is sure: His administration's incompetence will break already fragile systems. We have both an obligation and an opportunity to build better ones. ■

The repeal-and-replace debate is just a prelude to the real reckoning that will be forced by Trump's destructive incompetence.

SNAPSHOT/ARIANA CUBILLOS

On the Brink

A National Guardsman in Caracas, Venezuela, keeps his weapon trained during protests after President Nicolás Maduro's opposition called for a national strike.

Calvin Trillin
Deadline Poet

ADIEU, SEAN SPICER

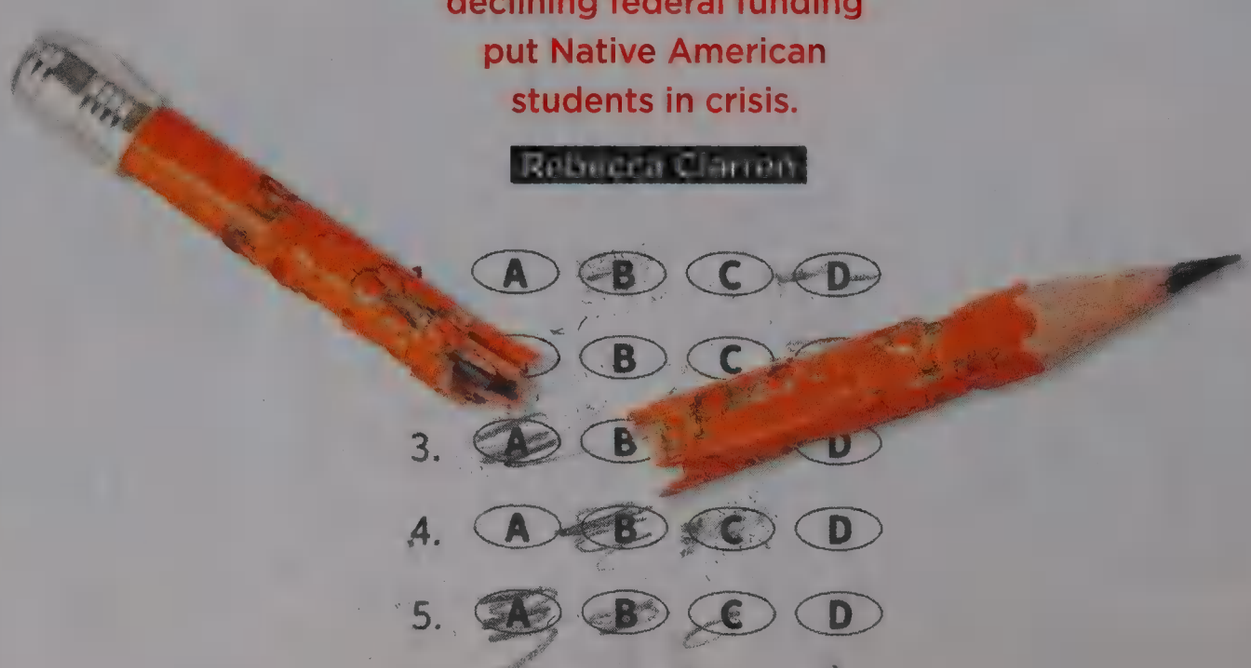
Reporters fired questions, trying
Their best to get behind his lying.
He stood there, stolid, thick—evoking
A bull that picadors were poking.

AP

LEFT BEHIND

How punitive discipline, inadequate curriculums, and declining federal funding put Native American students in crisis.

Rebecca Clarren



INSIDE A DOUBLE-WIDE TRAILER ON THE WARM SPRINGS RESERVATION IN central Oregon, nearly two dozen American Indian high-school students sit facing computers, teaching themselves math and history. Rain slaps the roof. Ear buds dangle from one girl's left ear. Two more students whisper, sharing a joke. Still another student, his face set in a serious expression, stares at the screen before him. The one teacher in the room previously taught third grade; he's certified to teach high-school continuing education and agricultural science. Nearly all of the young people who study in this trailer—officially called the Bridges Career and Technical High School at Warm Springs—are Native Americans. Bridges is a public school, created as an alternative for teens who aren't on track to graduate, or who have been repeatedly suspended or expelled from the large, diverse high school in the town of Madras—"up there," as the residents of the reservation call it.

Here in the Jefferson County 509J School District, more than a third of all American Indian students in sixth through 12th grades were suspended at least once during the 2015–16 school year, making them more than twice as likely to be suspended from school as their white peers. Native Americans make up one-third of the district's student population but receive nearly two-thirds of the expulsions. They are the kids that the district has "thrown away," said Dawn Smith, a former elementary-school teacher and administrator who worked for the district for nearly 30 years.

Savannah Holliday, a poised 18-year-old who lives on the Warm Springs reservation, was expelled in each year of middle school, once after fighting with another student who, Holliday said, called her a racial slur. After she was kicked out, Holliday's only option was to attend virtual classes like those offered in the trailer at Warm Springs. The computer-taught lessons weren't very engaging, Holliday said, and she still doesn't understand many basic math concepts. "I missed out on a lot of learning opportunities. You were kind of on your own—they'd have people watching you, but sometimes, if we asked for help, they couldn't help." Many of her classmates who were suspended or expelled eventually dropped out of school altogether. When I asked Holliday if she could introduce me to some of them, she texted back: "Most of them are pregnant, parents, addicted to drugs, moved away or dead…so would be hard for me to contact them."

Last year, less than two-thirds of the tribal members enrolled as seniors in the 509J School District graduated.

Last year, less than two-thirds of the tribal members who were enrolled as seniors in the 509J School District graduated. Warm Springs Tribal Councilwoman Carina Miller, who graduated from the district in 2005, is concerned that Native students aren't receiving an equal education. The administrators "don't see us as people deserving the same sort of education and opportunities," she said. Miller was suspended several times herself, once for swearing; a white student once called her a "prairie nigger." As a student, she added, "I felt worthless—like I wasn't worth the effort or patience to understand who I am and my history. This school district has failed us my entire lifetime, and it continues to do this today."

Warm Springs is not an outlier in this. Across the country, American Indian and Alaska Native students are disciplined more than most other racial groups, and they have a dropout rate twice the national average, resulting in what academic experts call a nationwide "crisis" for Native students. Many tribal leaders and education experts say these dismal statistics reflect, at worst, overt discrimination—and, at best, the alienation that Native students feel in a school system that has few Native teachers overall as well as limited lessons on Native American history and culture. For decades, the US Congress has allocated money to enhance the learning opportunities for Native students, who are among the poorest in the nation. But that amount is steadily declining on a per-pupil basis, and there is little oversight of how the money is actually used.

When the United States signed its treaties with the Indian tribes, stripping them of their land, it promised to provide public services—including education—to tribal members in perpetuity. "For too long, the federal leadership has failed to honor that sacred pledge, leaving generations of Native children behind," said Washington State Senator John McCoy, a citizen of the Tulalip tribe and a national leader in Native education reform. "Institutionalized assimilation and racism remain embedded within our public schools."

IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS ACROSS THE COUNTRY, AMERICAN Indian and Alaska Native students are more likely to be suspended than any other racial group, with the exception of African Americans. According to a 2015 report by the University of California at Los Angeles's Center for Civil Rights Remedies, Native students are disciplined at roughly two times the rate of their white peers. And though they represent approximately 1 percent of the student population, they account for 2 percent of all school arrests and 3 percent of all incidents referred by school staff to law enforcement, according to 2014 data collected by the National Congress of American Indians. Native students also disproportionately attend virtual schools like Bridges, according to an analysis conducted for this article by UCLA. Recent studies show that most students who attend these schools learn less math or reading than their peers in traditional public schools. (More than 90 percent of American Indian students attend public schools, while a majority of the rest attend schools administered by the Bureau of Indian Education, where students have some of the lowest graduation rates and test scores nationwide.)

The high levels of poverty on Native American reservations do create barriers to educational success. But a number of studies have shown that, even when researchers control for poverty, race still determines whether students

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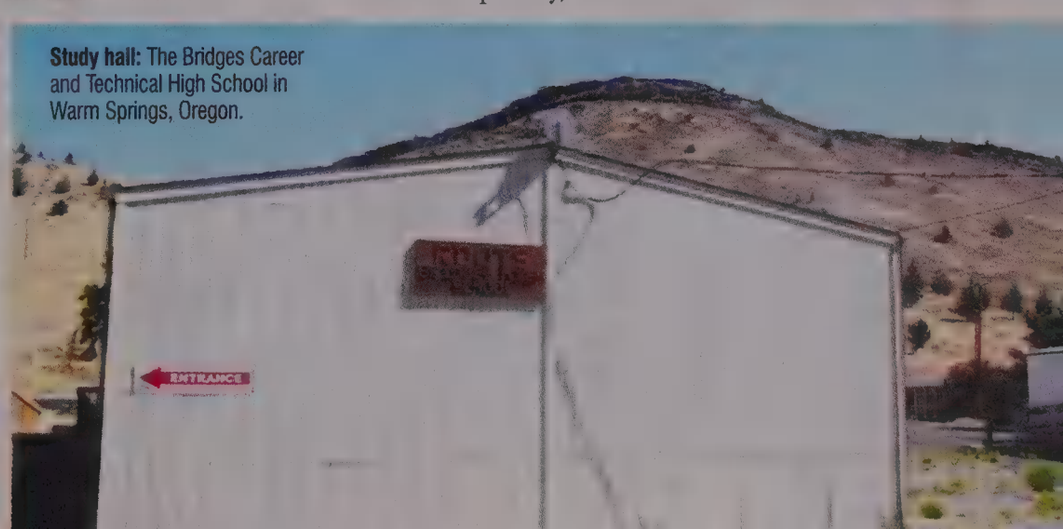

Study hall: The Bridges Career and Technical High School in Warm Springs, Oregon.

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2. A B C D 5. A B C D 8. A B C D 11. A B C D
3. A B C D 6. A B C D 9. A B C D 12. A B C D

are more harshly disciplined in the public-school system—and students of all ethnicities who are suspended or expelled are more likely to leave school for good, a phenomenon that researchers refer to as being "pushed out."

Frequent suspensions or expulsions can also lead to gaps in learning, a cycle reflected in the poor math and reading scores of Native students on a national level. Native students are less likely to graduate in four years than any other racial group; by the time they reach their senior year, only 10 percent are proficient in math, according to the results compiled for the year 2015 by the National Assessment of Educational Progress. (Less than 5 percent of Native 11th graders in Oregon's 509J School District met math-proficiency levels in 2016.)

Harsh discipline and low graduation rates can limit the economic and social opportunities for students beyond their teenage years. Low graduation rates contribute to high unemployment on reservations, as well as diminished levels of home ownership. Though Native Americans are regularly omitted from national studies, in large part due to their small population size, studies of other minority groups have found that being expelled or dropping out of school is also associated with higher incarceration rates. Plus the suicide rate among Native teens is one and a half times higher than the national average, according to the Centers for Disease Control; it's likely that negative experiences in school, including expulsion or suspension, are associated with this epidemic, said Dr. R. Dale Walker, the director of Oregon Health and Science University's Center for American Indian Health Education and Research.

"Why the heck aren't we doing better, and why has it taken so long? I just go, 'Ugh!'" said Rick Molitor, the superintendent of the 509J School District for the past nine years. (He retired on July 1.) Molitor adds that the high disciplinary rates stem, in large part, from a lack of cultural understanding among teachers. In the past two years, he's been working with the Warm Springs tribe to increase cultural programming in the schools, and he credits new facilities and programs like Bridges with helping to increase the graduation rate. Even so, "we have a long ways to go," he acknowledged. "I've been going out to Warm Springs and saying, 'We're failing our Native American kids.' There's no way we can come forward and say we're being successful."

"I felt worthless—like I wasn't worth the effort or patience to understand who I am and my history."

—Warm Springs Tribal Councilwoman Carina Miller

IN LATE JUNE, THE ACLU OF MONTANA SUPPORTED A FORMAL COMPLAINT WITH both the US Department of Education and the Department of Justice alleging that a school district in rural Montana discriminates against students who are citizens of the Assiniboine and Sioux nations. "Native students have been systematically disadvantaged in comparison to their non-Native peers through racially biased enforcement of school discipline policies, inequitable access to school activities, and verbal abuse by teachers and staff," attorney Melina Healey asserted in a statement announcing the complaint. (Schools receiving public money are required to abide by federal antidiscrimination laws, including Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.)

The Montana complaint also alleges that the district mismanages the Native-specific federal funding that is allocated by Congress to support Native students and fulfill treaty obligations. Many tribes describe this money as critical for their students. Without it, kids in places like Putnam City, Oklahoma, might go without backpacks, calculators, or caps and gowns at graduation. Districts in other states use the funds to support students by sponsoring Native American clubs, powwows, and Native music or language classes.

Despite their importance, these federal funding programs are loosely managed. The Johnson O'Malley program, created in 1934 to fund basic educational needs of Native students, disperses money based on the number of enrolled tribal members attending public school. Congress hasn't completed the necessary population survey since 1994, while the number of Native students has grown by approximately 4 percent per year—meaning that the same pool of money authorized in 1994 must now cover far more children. In 1995, the federal government allocated $125 per student; last year, the allotment was just $63.80. President Trump's proposed budget would cut program spending even further, by 30 percent. Over a year ago, Democratic Senator Heidi Heitkamp of North Dakota introduced a bill that would update the survey; it hasn't gotten out of committee.

The other major source of federal money specifically earmarked for Native students are Title VI grants, which school districts use to enhance the educational experience of Native kids through things like music or language classes. The US Department of Education conducts only cursory audits of the program, and it fails to ensure that the money is targeted specifically to Native students, rather than the student body at large.

Tribal members in other areas share the Assiniboine and Sioux nations' concern about mismanagement of this funding, which amounts to more than $100 million each year nationally. Attempts to learn how Oregon's 509J School District and others use the funds revealed a lack of transparency and oversight. "Many tribes are regularly concerned about how exactly districts are spending the money intended to help our children," said Quinton Roman Nose, executive director of the Tribal Education Departments National Assembly, via e-mail. "Often when we ask for specific details on where the money goes, we get a broad budget that doesn't provide answers to questions being asked by tribes and parents. Ultimately, there's the golden rule: He who has the gold rules. And the schools are the grantees; they've got the money, and they can do with it whatever they want."

THE ROOTS OF THE CURRENT CRISIS IN AMERICAN Indian education were planted 138 years ago, when the great-great-great-grandparents of today's students were children. Seen as an enlightened alternative to genocide, the federal government and a network of churches created hundreds of Indian boarding schools intended to assimilate Native Americans and eradicate their culture. If Native parents didn't send their children away to these schools, agents of the Department of the Interior were authorized to arrest them or withhold food (provided in exchange for land), which for most families meant starvation.

"Education affords the true solution to the Indian problem…only by complete isolation of the Indian child from his savage antecedents can he be satisfactorily educated," Indian School Superintendent John B. Riley declared in 1886. In these boarding schools, which persisted into the 1970s, Native children weren't allowed to speak

their own language, practice their culture, or see their family on a regular basis. Some students were physically or sexually abused by their teachers or dormitory supervisors. Many returned to their families and tribal communities deeply scarred. Dr. Susan Faircloth, a professor of education at the University of North Carolina, Wilmington, and a member of the Coharie tribe, pointed out that this history "make[s] it difficult, if not impossible, for many American Indian families and their children to fully engage with schools and educators."

Today, there are no Native classroom teachers or administrators at Madras High School, the large public school serving the Warm Springs Reservation. "The reason why behaviors are so bad here in this district is that teachers aren't culturally aware," said Ellise David, a senior at the school, which has a student body that is one-third Native American, one-third Hispanic, and one-third white. David, a member of the school board and the Indian Education Committee for the tribe, added that many teachers don't understand the challenges that Native students and their families face—for example, getting to a teacher conference on time if they don't have a car. "I hate teachers who are more like, 'I'm only here to teach—I'm not here to know your family,'" David said. "Being aware of what the students go through—not just Native students, but Hispanics too—will help the teachers manage their classrooms."

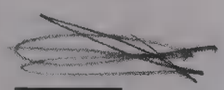
Most of the parents, teachers, and students in Warm Springs whom I interviewed for this story were afraid that if they were quoted, the district would somehow punish them. One teacher that I interviewed on background was placed on administrative leave, ostensibly out of concern that she had shared confidential information about students during our conversation, according to an investigator that the district hired, who contacted me. (She hadn't.)

Again, the lack of Native teachers and administrators isn't unique to Madras. Less than 1 percent of educators nationwide are American Indian or Alaska Native. This is a real problem, because having teachers of one's own race can be a key to educational success: A recent study of 100,000 black students found that if they had at least one African-American teacher between third and fifth grade, their chances of dropping out declined by 29 percent. Though the Office of Indian Education has a grant program intended to create more Native teachers and administrators, the program is mismanaged, according to a 2010 audit by the Department of Education inspector general's office—leading to waste, fraud, and abuse, as well as a failure to fund projects that conduct significant training. (The OIE declined to answer whether it had made any reforms since the audit.)

This dearth of Native teachers is mirrored by the lack of lessons about Native Americans taught to public-school students across the country. Eighty-seven percent of the references to American Indians in the various state academic standards, upon which textbooks are based, concern events that happened before 1900, according to one 2015 study; only Arizona, Washington, Oklahoma, and Kansas teach about the boarding schools. Though the situation is better than it was 50 years ago, Native American content in school textbooks still perpetuates cultural stereotypes, while few textbooks convey the tribal perspectives on historical events and cultural concerns, according to a 2012 survey. (For example, some Nebraska textbooks have described American Indians as lazy and drunk.)

"For more than a century, we've made Natives understand the non-Native culture and adjust accordingly, and it does not work. It's not reciprocal—it's assimilation," said Ahniwake Rose, executive director of the National Indian Education Association. "Native students are often only shown small and very specific reflections of themselves in school—usually lesson plans around the 'Thanksgiving story,' or 'Indian pride' in the context of a school mascot. These reflections are so wrong, so totally off base, that our students disengage from learning."

For both Native and non-Native teachers who want to help their Native students thrive, there is a paucity of available research to guide their efforts. Because of their relatively small numbers in the overall population, Native students often don't get studied. Indian educational leaders refer to themselves as the "Asterisk Nation": "an asterisk, instead of [a] data point, is often used in data displays," reports the National Congress of American Indians.



Native students are disciplined at roughly two times the rate of their white peers.

Without reliable data and research, government agencies at every level don't know how to fix problems or allocate funds. This lack of understanding filters down to the classrooms of local schools, where teachers and administrators are often ignorant about their Native students. For example, Warm Springs and other tribes hold funeral ceremonies that last for several weeks; some school districts expel students who miss so many classes. According to a 2013 Office for Civil Rights complaint made by California's Wiyot tribe against the local school district for a range of mistreatment, teachers regularly touched their Native students' long hair, which is culturally offensive.

Last winter, I watched Laura Lynn, an educational trainer and professor at the University of Washington's new Native Education Certificate program, teach a fifth-grade lesson on colonization. She studied a crayon drawing made by a student who'd been asked to depict a place that was sacred to her. "I like this part of the beach you made," Lynn said, ripping off a corner of the paper. The class grew silent. She continued to tear the paper. "I think I'll keep it."

Lynn's students were actually middle- and high-school teachers attending a series of statewide training sessions mandated by a state law—long on the books but only fully funded last year—that requires school districts to teach the history, government, and culture of their local tribes, using curriculums created and vetted by tribal people. "To come

(continued on page 25)

"Complete isolation": Students at the Mount Pleasant Indian School, where Native children were sent to be assimilated.

BRITAIN'S MIDSUMMER FEVER DREAM

Can a strong left arise from the chaos of Brexit, austerity, and the 2017 election?

John Harris

LIFE IN BRITAIN IN 2017 IS INCREASINGLY REDOLENT OF WHAT JOAN Didion said about her experience of America in the late 1960s and early '70s, in her brilliant essay collection *The White Album*: "I was supposed to have a script, and had mislaid it.... I was meant to know the plot, but all I knew was what I saw: flash pictures in variable sequence, images with no 'meaning' beyond their temporary arrangement, not a movie but a cutting-room experience." This is what it's currently like being a political journalist in the United Kingdom, where there is no end of stuff to report, but also a febrile, almost hallucinatory atmosphere that often makes the telling of coherent stories all but impossible.

The country is in the midst of its most turbulent period in at least three decades. There have been three terrorist attacks since the early summer, one in Manchester and two in London. And on June 14, a terrible fire consumed Grenfell Tower, a housing project in West London, killing at least 80 people and highlighting years of neglect of public housing and the city's ever-widening inequality. With good reason, some people have characterized the disaster and its aftermath as "the British Katrina."

Meanwhile, the political landscape is shifting and buckling, with the ruling Conservative Party anxiously clinging to power while the opposition Labour Party, transformed by its new radical-left leadership, has just scored its highest vote share in 16 years. As a result, austerity—the watchword of British governments since 2010—may be in retreat.

Yet contradictions abound. The economic consequences of so-called Brexit—the biggest change in the UK's affairs since 1945—are already starting to bite. There has been rising inflation due to the weak pound, and a looming threat of big financial interests leaving the country, which threatens one of the government's few dependable sources of tax revenue. Every day seems to bring news of another complicated element of leaving the European Union that the people in power have seemingly failed to understand.

Avoidable tragedy: Grenfell Tower is consumed in flames, June 14, 2017.

What all this signals is inevitably complex and, so far, uncertain. Above all, many of the summer's developments highlight a new quicksilver reality—partly rooted in the failure of Western governments to find any convincing solutions to the deep problems exposed by the 2008 crash—that seems to careen from one unforeseen event to another. But somewhere in all the chaos, there may be a glimmer of hope. Thanks to Donald Trump's jarring ascent, the UK's vote for Brexit, and the rise of reactionary populism in Europe, many progressives had come to the fatalistic conclusion that the 21st century's political entropy would only help the political right. Britain, by contrast, may just have taken an appreciable step to the left.

The United Kingdom is in the midst of its most turbulent period in at least three decades.

IN RETROSPECT, THE UK'S INCREASING AIR OF CRISIS was vastly intensified in April when Theresa May—the British prime minister and Conservative Party leader—decided to call a snap election. When she did so, her towering poll numbers suggested a landslide victory, but after a month of campaigning, her party's lack of a coherent program and her own apparently terrified response to the demands of electioneering led to a sudden sea change. Labour began to gain ground, and May—whose stiff demeanor prompted a *Guardian* writer to mock her as "the Maybot," a name that quickly caught on—increasingly became an object of ridicule. Having started the campaign with a lead of up to 25 percent in the polls, her party finished a mere two points ahead and lost its parliamentary majority. Among voters under 45, the Conservatives trailed Labour decisively, with 18- to 24-year-olds choosing Labour by a margin of 35 percent.

Naturally, numbers only tell a fraction of the story. I spent pretty much the entirety of the election period on the road, and the way the whole thing began to turn was a fascinating story. At first, the voters I met tended to either sigh with exasperation at the very mention of the election, or concur that May's claim to offer "strong and stable" leadership was both an accurate picture of her talents and exactly what the Brexit moment demanded. Then, as she wobbled and Labour made its case with an increasing confidence, people quietly began to shift.

In Wolverhampton, a bellwether city in the English Midlands where the Conservatives were predicted to win a crucial seat from Labour, I spent a balmy afternoon watching Labour activists meet a newly receptive public, and encountering people who had backed the Conservatives in the past but were rethinking their loyalties. Echoing Labour's big campaign themes, one woman talked anxiously of "sections of our society who are being made to suffer." Another confessed that although she had been "100 percent Conservative," after conversations with her Labour-supporting daughter, she was now seriously considering changing her mind.

Then came an electrifying election night spent in nearby Birmingham, where twentysomethings, crammed into the local nightlife district, talked about their new sense of political excitement and often joined in a chant, sung to the tune of the White Stripes' "Seven Nation Army," that has since become something of an anthem: "Oh, Jer-e-my Cor-byn."

Corbyn has been the Labour leader since September 2015, and his elevation to the role had two big initial effects: scandalizing the parts of his party whose politics had been forged under Tony Blair, while delighting his hundreds of thousands of supporters, many of whom were new to political activism. In the ensuing 20 months, Corbyn didn't exactly prosper, but the snap election brought out a set of formidable strengths. Far from being the leftist ogre demonized by the right-wing press, Corbyn was revealed to be an avuncular, easygoing man with a talent for the banal rituals of mainstream TV. Perhaps more important, he is an instinctively energetic campaigner, able to personify the moral elements of his politics and to give the impression of someone largely free of self-importance.

In the immediate aftermath of the Grenfell Tower tragedy, while May played to type by initially avoiding any public meeting with the disaster's survivors, Corbyn was pictured listening to their grief and pain. Little more than a week later, he made a triumphant appearance at the annual Glastonbury festival, a 200,000-capacity out-

RIGHT: NATALIE OXFORD / CC 4.0

door spectacular whose other attractions included Radiohead and the Foo Fighters.

What is all this about? Judged by the ideological standards of recent Labour leaders, Corbyn and his inner circle are indeed radical leftists. But their program at the election was also straightforwardly populist, built around the renationalization of the UK's railroads (sold to private companies in the mid-1990s, with disastrous consequences), the abolition of tuition fees paid by university students, and free meals for school students. Above all else, Labour offered the prospect of an end to the seven years of austerity that have crippled many public services and begun to eat into Britain's beloved National Health Service.

Rhetorically, Corbyn talked in clear moral terms about such glaring issues as increased homelessness and the rise of food banks, and successfully conveyed the idea that May's low-tax, small-state vision of Brexit was bound up with the cruel, divisive aspects of her party's social policies. She tanked; he shone.

Now his political tribe is understandably ecstatic, and in the emotive environs of the online world, there is an ongoing frenzy that has recast an admirable advance as nothing less than victory. As his approval ratings leave May's in the dust, the latest meme is the claim that "Jeremy Corbyn is the prime minister."

YET THERE WERE LIMITS TO THE LABOUR SURGE that Corbyn and his people need to think about. Labour still trails the Conservatives by 54 parliamentary seats and must win 64 to achieve a majority. Despite Conservative Party losses, its lead in the election among people over 70 was estimated to be 50 percentage points. Echoing the Democratic Party in the United States, Labour also has a problem with some elements of its working-class base, as evidenced by a handful of defeats in the English North and Midlands, and other places where the Tory vote went up thanks to voters supposedly at the ragged end of Conservative austerity.

Labour's electoral coalition came together very quickly, galvanized not just by a tilt toward the political left, but by the huge shock of last year's Brexit referendum. But the politics swirling around this defining issue are surreally complicated. Corbyn campaigned only halfheartedly last year for Britain to remain part of Europe and has been accused by some of his detractors of actively sabotaging the official pro-EU effort. He has a long record of skepticism about the EU, shared by all of his key people. And his party's success at the election was partly based on the smoothing-over of a big fault line among its supporters.

To younger, more metropolitan voters fearful of leaving the EU, Labour sent out the message that it would resist the Conservatives' "hard" Brexit by prioritizing jobs and safeguarding the rights of EU citizens living in Britain. But it also assured the parts of its base that had backed Brexit that it accepted the result of the referendum and its consequences, including new restrictions on immigration. In the haze of post-election euphoria, the fragility of this balancing act was temporarily forgotten, but as negotiations between the UK and Europe get going, it is beginning to reveal itself anew. As the doom around Brexit gathers, holding these two bases of support in place—let alone widening Labour's reach—will require a level of political skill even greater than Corbyn demonstrated during the campaign.

Toil and trouble: Labour's Jeremy Corbyn gets the rock-star treatment in Glastonbury; Donald Trump and Theresa May bond at the White House.

The progressive challenge is to ensure that Labour's surge is not another short-lived part of the ongoing entropy, but a solid answer to it.

To hear some of his supporters talk, Corbyn's advance is proof of the demise of the politics minted by Blair's so-called "New Labour" and Bill Clinton's "New Democrats." Given that this approach had no answers to the huge issues crystallized by the 2008 financial crash, that would not be a bad thing. But the truth may be that 21st-century politics is much more uncertain, and the way that Corbyn went from zero to hero in a matter of weeks looks like further proof of how politics flips around in the topsy-turvy reality in which we find ourselves.

His newfound success has two elements. One, paralleled by the rise of new left parties in Europe, grows from the failure of orthodox social democracy to answer the demands of an age of inequality and insecurity; it is born of the sense that politics in the West remains in an interregnum between the end of the Thatcher-Reagan period and the possible birth of a more collectivist, economically interventionist era. But the other factor is harder to frame in such conventional terms, and it's bound up with a period of accelerated technological change, ever more volatile electorates, and the rise of a new spirit of antipolitics.

In the latter context, authenticity is a huge asset, and what were once perceived as shortcomings can be recast as advantages (for example, Corbyn is a pretty lousy public speaker, but his followers seem to love it). The danger is that content always comes second to novelty and that great surges can quickly subside, as proved by everything from the retreat of Scotland's pro-independence movement to the way the once-insurgent forces of right-wing populism in Europe seem to be in abeyance, at least for now.

That Corbyn, like Bernie Sanders, embodies a revival of the left is unquestionable. But this is the 21st century, not the 20th; events now seem to move at warp speed. And look at how wildly the political pendulum swings: from Obama to Trump, from Europe supposedly splintering into fragments to the hegemonic leadership of Emmanuel Macron and Angela Merkel, and from Brexit to the British election. As the cliché goes, no one knows anything anymore—but that also includes the people on the left now claiming that they somehow have the key to the future.

In the UK, the progressive challenge is to ensure that Labour's surge is not another short-lived part of the ongoing entropy, but a solid answer to it. That doesn't amount to a counsel of despair, but it does point to a sobering imperative: as the jubilation subsides, to be as self-critical and realistic as this most complex of political moments demands. ■

John Harris is a UK-based writer and journalist with The Guardian, *where he also co-produces and presents its acclaimed video series "Anywhere but Westminster."*

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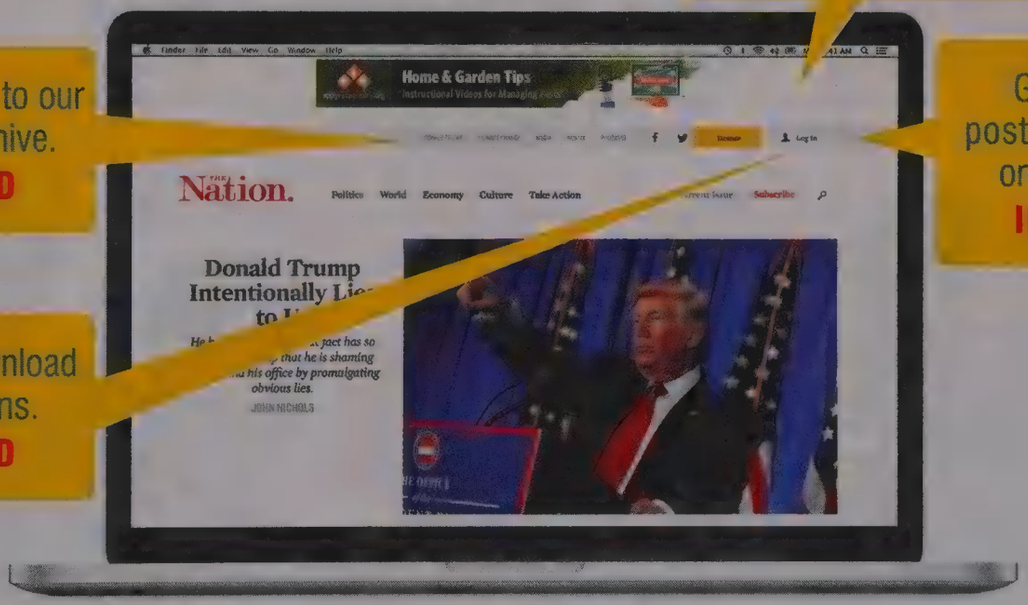

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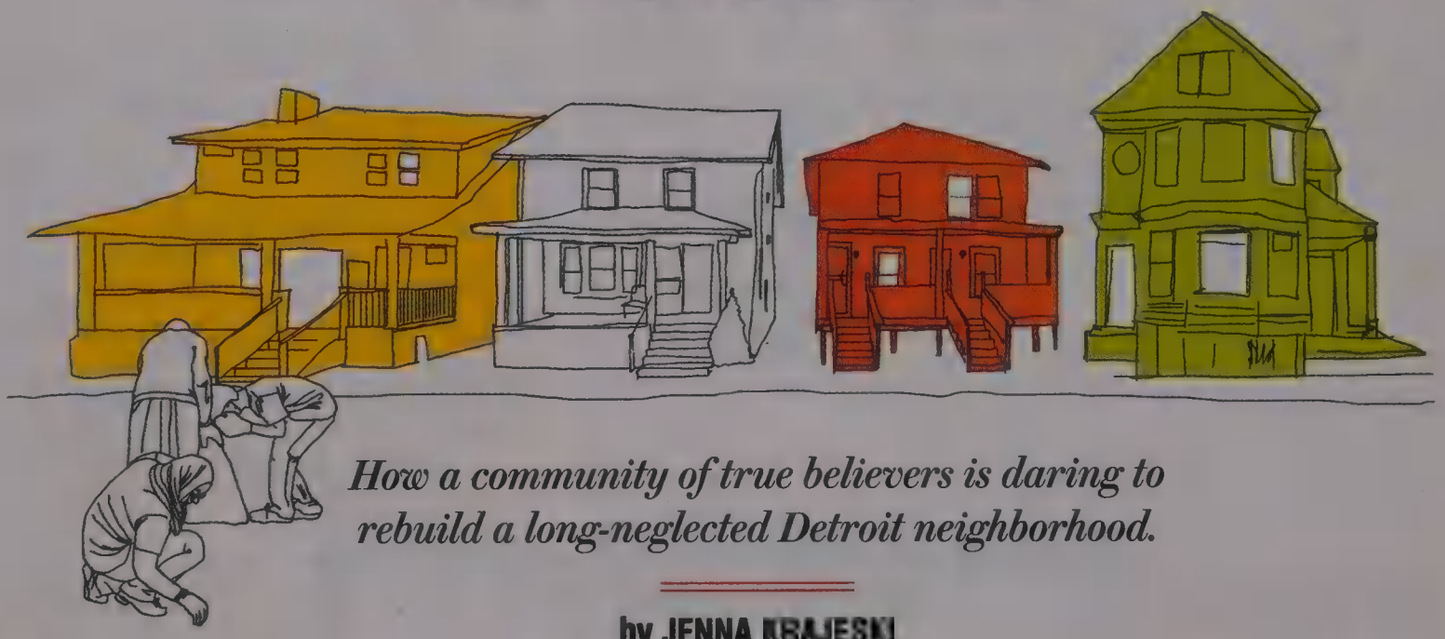

How a community of true believers is daring to rebuild a long-neglected Detroit neighborhood.

by JENNA KRAJESKI

In May 2016, when Mark Crain and Hazel Gómez moved with their two young sons to a house on Waverly Street in Detroit, more than a few people wondered how long they would last there. The street was ugly and desolate, not a place where people like Crain and Gómez—young, college-educated, new parents—typically moved. No one really moved there. It was the sort of street held up to illustrate Detroit's decline, and its emptiness was both a sign of citywide failure and, potentially, of individual success. If you had the means to do so, you *left* the neighborhood.

The roofs on some of Waverly Street's houses had collapsed, allowing the Michigan winter to pulverize their insides. Others had been torched by arsonists or demolished by the city, their plots overgrown with weeds. At the end of the block, on Rosa Parks Boulevard, Longfellow Middle School had sat empty since 2008, its graffitied walls concealing the shadowy dealings of squatters. Two houses on the street, people said, were being used as drug dens.

For at least a decade, Detroit has been the site of massive new investment—an attempt to revive the storied American city from the twin assaults of the 2008 financial crash and the 2013 municipal bankruptcy. But its rebirth has been lopsided, with dozens of neighborhoods sacrificed like jetsam, or simply forgotten, in the scramble to resuscitate more-profitable areas. Young newcomers have usually been lured downtown, where ambitious developers transformed the riverside buildings into condos and a small monorail, called a "people mover," carries the residents in circles around the same few blocks. Or they have gone to midtown, in the shadow of the Detroit Institute of Arts and the city's first Whole Foods.

Detroit's rebirth has been lopsided, with dozens of neighborhoods sacrificed like jetsam, or simply forgotten.

In some respects, there's little new in this dynamic. Even during the city's prime, developers and lawmakers prioritized certain neighborhoods over others, and the lines were clearly drawn according to race. Since the early 20th century, when southern African Americans were drawn north by the promise of jobs and tolerance, black neighborhoods consistently suffered in comparison with white ones. A new highway sliced through Black Bottom and Paradise Valley; the suburbs excluded black Detroiters; and racist housing laws entrenched the city's segregation, helping to spark the riots that broke out 50 years ago this July. By 2010, decades after its white population had abandoned the city (followed, eventually, by members of the black middle class), Detroit was 83 percent black, while the suburbs were overwhelmingly white. Movement to the gentrified downtown area, meanwhile, has been noticeably white as well.

Crain and Gómez's house on Waverly was six and a half miles north of downtown—a haul in city terms—but they had good reasons for the move. Crain grew up in Detroit in the 1990s; his father owned a locksmith shop near the neighborhood, and though he admired the herculean efforts of downtown developers, he worried that they were sucking the life out of the dozens of neighborhoods—each one distinct, and each one cherished—that make up his city. Gómez had never lived in Detroit, but she'd met Crain working for the Inner-City Muslim Action Network (IMAN) in Chicago, and she could see that Detroit needed help. Plus, before they were married, Crain told Gómez in no uncertain terms that he intended to move back. "We didn't have a prenup," Crain said, "but if there was one, that would be the one thing."

Waverly Street, for all its blight, had one singular draw for a young, activist-minded Muslim couple: A few lots east of their new house was the Muslim Center, a mosque that had long served Detroit's black Muslim community. By the time Crain and Gómez got there, it was the tenacious, healthy heart of a dying neighborhood. What had started in 1985 as a prayer room in an old bank building was by then an expanse of offices and classrooms surrounding a cavernous gym used for craft fairs and as a soup kitchen. The HUDA Free Clinic had moved across the street after outgrowing its first office, and clinic employees had planted rows of vegetables, fruits, and herbs—the HUDA Urban Garden—in an empty lot, providing clients with homeopathic remedies or, more often, free groceries. A new prayer room accommodated hundreds of worshippers, while the original masjid had become the Halal Jazz Cafe, the brainchild of Imam Abdullah El-Amin, a beloved leader at the center and one of its founders.

But while the Muslim Center had grown, the neighborhood around it deteriorated, and few of the people who prayed there lived nearby. They watched from a distance as downtown came back to life, and they fretted over the city's plans for the neighborhood. Even worse than the possibility of its being razed for green space was the non-plan, in which it would be left to wither. It was hard not to see Detroit's renaissance as the rebirth of white Detroit, and the death of the Muslim Center neighborhood as the banishing of its black congregants.

To some people, though, this neglect offered an opportunity. Perhaps Waverly Street wasn't blighted, but simply unimagined: a blank slate for an ideal neighborhood, one filled with Muslim families and Muslim-friendly businesses—albeit open to anyone—and with the Muslim Center as its spiritual and social core. The liquor stores and drug houses—two curses, they thought, of a struggling Detroit—would be absent, and the community so close-knit that crime would naturally fade away. The principles of Islamic finance, which bans usury and encourages charity, would guide home purchases and new businesses. And for the first time, people who prayed at the Muslim Center would be able to walk there.

To mold this vision into reality, two groups—the Detroit-based Neighborly Needs and the suburban Indus Community Action Network, or iCAN—formed a nonprofit in 2012 called Dream of Detroit (tagline: "A Detroit Revival Engaging American Muslims"). They

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Living the dream: Mark Crain meets with volunteers during the Vacant Home Board-Up Day event in 2015.

ILLUSTRATION BY **LOUISA BERTMAN**

set their sights on 20 lots and started collecting donations, recruiting volunteers, and organizing fund-raisers within the metro area's Muslim community. Crain took on a voluntary role as project manager (his day job is with MoveOn.org), and Dream is why he and Gómez settled their young family here. It is also why even the people who wondered how long they'd be able to hack it have begun thinking about moving there themselves.

On a cool spring day in 2016, a group of volunteers—mostly Muslims from the city and suburbs—had gathered on Waverly Street to clear the area of debris. A gaggle of teenagers from Dearborn nailed a particleboard sign over a broken window, declaring the house protected by Dream of Detroit. Others were busy hauling off pieces of abandoned furniture.

It was a convivial afternoon. Donald Trump had not yet been elected president, and the worst years of post-9/11 surveillance seemed to be over. So when Farooq Azizudin, a member of the housing committee and a former Black Panther, joked about letting a photographer take his picture because "I'm not wanted by the FBI anymore," the group of volunteers was relaxed enough to giggle. "That's gonna be the last FBI joke this morning," Crain said. More laughter.

Nearby, Thaddeus and Baheejah Shakoor, the husband-and-wife team behind Neighborly Needs, gazed at the dust billowing off the rubble of what was once the Longfellow Middle School. The city had demolished it earlier that year. At first, Baheejah's heart was broken—she had dreamed of transforming the complex into a community center—but soon she saw it as a good thing, a fresh start. A couple of investors from New York City—a doctor of Palestinian descent and a lawyer from Jordan—wanted to buy the lot and build her vision from scratch. "She thought that school was our destiny," Thaddeus said. "Just shows you how God plans things."

Perhaps Waverly Street wasn't blighted, but simply unimagined: a blank slate for an ideal neighborhood.

Dream of Detroit had finished its first house three years earlier, a two-story home half a block from the Muslim Center. When the group bought it, the porch was sagging and the windows were smashed. Dream hired local laborers—city-based, not suburban—to replace the boiler and pipes, renovated the kitchen and bathroom, and hung a plaque beside the door proclaiming it a Dream house. Then the group tried to find someone willing to move in. The house was nice; the neighborhood, not so much. Eventually, Nadirah Abdullah, a middle-aged mother from Detroit's West Side with a tough, itinerant history and not many other options, moved in with her 12-year-old son. "I'll be honest," she writes in a Dream pamphlet. "After having jumped around from family to family member and even sometimes living in shelters, just being around Muslims keeps me in a better state of mind."

In 2015, the group added three more homes and set its sights on eight more from the Detroit Land Bank Authority, a quasi-governmental agency that has auctioned thousands of city properties since 2008. Dream received three sizable donations, but most of the money came from hundreds of small donors, which was fine because the organization's goals—at least the tangible ones—were modest: 20 homes in the first phase, most of which would cost under $10,000, with rehab fees hovering around $30,000. No one wanted to do anything fancy.

The Shakoors bought a house on Waverly and transformed the upstairs into a Dream office, holding an online fund-raiser for items like a color printer and office chairs. Soon Muslim Center members were buying in on their own. Aminah Abdullah, a mother of three from Atlanta, was attracted by the idea of a neighborhood being built around a mosque. As a teenager, she'd spent time studying the Quran in Senegal, where, she said, "I learned to become a true African American." It was also where she saw Islam in public—people praying outside, mosques within blocks of their homes. "It was the first time in my life I was able to fully immerse myself and be comfortable being a Muslim," she said. Her house, which she bought with relatives, is on Tyler Street, a block south of Waverly.

Muslim developers joined in. Karriem Van Leesten, enticed by Dream of Detroit's vision of a community created around a mosque (something too expensive in his native Boston), chose six lots. He didn't expect to make money, at least at first, but he wanted to draw Muslims out of the suburbs: "The Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, was a city guy. He lived in Mecca and Medina, and they were thriving. So who could feel good about being in Dearborn and having everything you want? It's a great place, but why not go to Detroit and check it out?"

In his office at the Muslim Center, now shared with his successor, Imam Momodou Ceesay, Imam El-Amin keeps a "Whites Only" placard as a reminder of his childhood in the Jim Crow South, which was also his path to Islam. When he says that he wants Dream of Detroit to "impart Islamic values," he speaks from that specific American history, and he speaks for many at the Muslim Center.

Baheejah Shakoor grew up in Detroit in the 1950s, when neighborhoods like this one were full of black families, many of whom had fled the South but found little relief from racism in Detroit. Baheejah converted to Islam in her mid-teens along with many family members who were drawn to the Nation of Islam, then led by Elijah Muhammad, and its message of empowerment. A few years later, Thaddeus, then living in New Haven, Connecticut, was dumbstruck upon seeing Malcolm X speak at Yale University. "It was just mind-boggling," he recalled, "so I knew that, eventually, I was going to be a Muslim." He converted in New York City in his early 20s; soon after, he and Baheejah,who was then studying nursing, started dating.

Walking the walk: Waseem Ullah helps beautify the community during Neighborhood Clean-Up Day 2016.

In New York, their faith connected them to home. The Nation of Islam had been born in Detroit, and Malcolm X, after converting in prison, was a minister at Temple No. 1, now called Masjid Wali Muhammad. The Muslim Center, a short drive from Wali Muhammad, was founded years later by followers of Warith Deen Muhammad, Elijah Muhammad's son, who is credited with reforming the more challenging theology of the Nation—most notably, downplaying the godlike figures of its leaders and softening its black nationalism—while preserving its focus on civil rights through Islam.

The Shakoors stayed with the Nation through their courtship, Thaddeus's stint in prison as a conscientious objector to the Vietnam War, and their marriage and subsequent move back to Detroit. Gradually, like most of their peers at the Muslim Center, they transitioned to traditional Sunnism. But also like most of their peers, they hold tightly to the lessons of Malcolm X and the Nation. "That history is ingrained in all Muslims," Thaddeus said.

When the black middle class left for the suburbs and lower-income families were scattered throughout the city, people still drove long distances on Fridays to pray at the Muslim Center. There were few places like it anywhere else, a religious space in which the complicated intersection of the black American and Muslim American experiences could be shared among worshippers. They worried that Detroit's catastrophe would overshadow the revolution—connecting racial equality to Islam—that began at Wali Muhammad and lived on at the Muslim Center. So they kept making the trip, Friday after Friday, parking in a fenced-in lot, praying, and then driving home.

Sixty years after the Shakoors converted, that same revolution drew Mark Crain to Islam. In college at Northwestern, where he double-majored in black studies and political science, he would keep one of his closest friends, a Muslim fraternity brother, up all night, wondering if, as Malcolm X had urged, Islam was the way to fight economic and racial inequality. "Our conversations were often as political as they were theological," Crain remembered. "Number one, the clear anti-racist disposition of the Quran and the sunna definitely appealed to me. But we were also talking about the ban on *ribah*—usury—and what that means for our global capitalist system."

The anti-Muslim backlash that followed 9/11 shook up the old divisions between Muslims in the United States.

IN COLLEGE, IT DIDN'T OCCUR TO CRAIN THAT because his fraternity brother was Pakistani and not African-American, they were participating in a kind of pan-Muslim bonding that's becoming central to Muslim activism today. American Muslims are divided—between city and suburbs, sects and practices, rich and poor, new immigrants and the native-born—and in Detroit, those divisions have often resulted in the isolation of black Muslims. The Shakoors knew this when they converted half a century ago, and Crain would soon find it out for himself.

The first big wave of Muslim immigrants came to Detroit in the 1960s. At first, African-American Muslims—engaged in what historian Sherman Jackson calls the "vigilant, holy protest of Black Religion"—felt a kinship with the immigrants, recognizing a parallel between the black American experience and Muslims living under colonialism in the Middle East. Immigrant Muslims, though, brought with them a rigid definition of who a Muslim is and what that Muslim looks like. It was a huge disappointment. "If Palestine and Kashmir were bona fide Islamic concerns," Jackson writes in *Islam and the Blackamerican: Looking Toward the Third Resurrection*, "why not police misconduct or Affirmative Action?"

For many of the Muslim immigrants, "economic success was complete with the attainment of whiteness," Khaled Beydoun, a lawyer and activist, told me. Beydoun grew up very aware of the racism among Arab Muslims. His Egyptian mother had a darker complexion, and some mocked her by calling her *abed*, Arabic for "slave," a slur so common that, in 2014, Detroit's black Muslim community launched a Twitter campaign against it. Beydoun remembers hearing warnings against visiting black mosques in Detroit as a child: "These are dangerous communities, you know; these are places where you are not wanted."

But Islam prohibits racism. "An Arab has no superiority over a non-Arab, nor a non-Arab any superiority over an Arab; also, a white has no superiority over a black, nor a black any superiority over a white—except by piety," the Prophet Muhammad said in his last sermon. Dawud Walid, the head of the Council on American-Islamic Relations' Michigan chapter and himself a black convert, captures the point with a folksy analogy: "To Allah, racism is just as haram as eating a ham sandwich."

The anti-Muslim backlash that followed 9/11 shook up the old divisions. Years of surveillance and rising Islamophobia united the Detroit-area communities in a shared anxiety about their future in America, and some immigrant Muslims began to look to the black experience for guidance. Zarinah El-Amin Naeem, Imam El-Amin's daughter, told me that after 9/11, other Muslims asked her, "'How do you deal with all this hatred?' Suddenly, they could learn from us."

Another turning point came in 2009, when Luqman

Before the Dream: An early rendering of the Waverly Project, Dream of Detroit's plan to revive the once-blighted street.

Ameen Abdullah, the imam of a small mosque in one of Detroit's most neglected neighborhoods, was shot and killed by the FBI during a sting. His death, and the meager media attention it received, united Detroit's Muslims against surveillance and the use of informants in mosques. But they still had a long way to go.

Enter Waseem Ullah and iCAN. Ullah, a middle-aged man who always sounds on the brink of laughter, grew up in a small town in Pakistan and came to the United States to be a doctor. He identified with black Muslims; as a South Asian visiting Mecca, he had felt looked down upon himself. "It's like you're not a first-class citizen or something," he said. "You're coming from Pakistan; you are on a lower level." A family tragedy would spark Ullah's awakening; afterward, he felt empty in his upper-middle-class life. He went to an IMAN conference on low-income housing in Chicago and thought about Detroit. "I wanted something in honor of my family," he said. Now Waverly means more to him than his home in Ann Arbor. "That's just a house," he said. "This I will identify with more."

Ullah was among the many Muslims in greater Detroit who fretted over what Islamophobia meant for them, their children, their grandparents. Dream of Detroit became proof of what the Muslim community really stood for. "We have been maligned and beaten up everywhere, but let them say whatever they're saying, we are not that kind of..." Ullah's voice trailed off. "We help others," he continued. "We do good, we love our suburb, and we are investing here. This is home."

"Cities Rising" is a Nation *series dedicated to tracking the progressive urban revival. For more from the series, please visit TheNation.com.*

Still, because the group is mostly Muslim and works out of a mosque, it has had to contend with questions ranging from the tiresome to the insulting. When someone wrote the first substantial article about Dream in 2015, one line made them hang their heads: "Pakistani immigrant Waseem Ullah loves America, abhors ISIS." It was a tiny part of an otherwise good article. Still, it stung. "The apologetics," Crain told me. "That's never been a part of our story."

"Trump is shaking us by our souls, waking us up and making us realize what is wrong."
—Babar Qadri

In 2016, after winning some local recognition, the Dream of Detroit team was invited to meet with Mayor Mike Duggan. The meeting was a success, if only because the mayor didn't tell them to stop. In fact, he heartily praised the project and highlighted the role of Muslims in the stability and future of Detroit. But the city's support was necessarily halfhearted—it was still under emergency management—and so Dream was left to thrive or fail on its own.

It kept going, slowly. The Muslim Center began offering classes on entrepreneurship, encouraging mosquegoers to consider alternatives to jobs that had disappeared. Detroit was in a DIY moment, with urban farms replacing weeds and slabs of paint from old graffiti transformed into jewelry, so no idea was too small or outlandish.

Meanwhile, Kemo Barrow, a financial planner originally from Gambia, started teaching a class on Islamic finance, reminding students that a good Muslim opts for equitable profit-sharing, not interest. Farooq Azizudin, from the housing committee, began to lobby for a co-op system, which would bring the community closer and defang the monster of foreclosure. They began connecting with grassroots groups throughout the city. Dream, and all it stood for, was being welcomed into the new Detroit—not the Detroit of the fancy downtown area, but the one being rebuilt by scores of organizations, each determined to stand up to the riptides of both economic decline and gentrification.

Then Donald Trump was elected president, and the city's Muslim leaders convened to discuss how to deal with the election. Classes on Islamophobia that had been held at the Muslim Center for years took on a renewed urgency, focusing on "reporting crimes, [having] someone escort women to the cars in the parking lot, being hypervigilant," one organizer told me. People worried that, even if Trump's presidency united Detroit's Muslims against hate, it would still have a 9/11-like chilling effect

I went back to the neighborhood in late April 2017. It was tidy and inviting on Waverly and the surrounding streets, although the Muslim Center was still the area's life support. The aura of vigilance was strong, but people's feelings about the new political reality were expressed in sometimes surprising ways. "I'm glad Trump is president," said Babar Qadri, a London-born physician's assistant who heads the HUDA garden. "He is shaking us by our souls, waking us up and making us realize what is wrong." Like a good doctor, Qadri knows that before you can treat a disease, you first have to diagnose it. "See, this isn't a conspiracy," he told me. "This is real, and it's strengthening us."

Mark Crain's response was more circumspect. He had outlined his thoughts on then-candidate Trump in an e-mail sent the year before: "There's a general level of concern that's normalized for Black people in this country that makes it hard for me to be empathetic with someone being hysterical about the possibility of a President Trump." By mid-2017, Crain's opinion on that matter hadn't changed, and neither had the day-to-day work of Dream. Still, he was uneasy: "One thing that's fair to say is that we all expect to be under more scrutiny as a 501(c)(3) [nonprofit organization] with the word 'Muslim' in it," he told me.

Crain and Gómez's house was now a home, full of books and toys. It still needed work—"We took it down to the studs," Crain said—but they felt they'd made the right decision. They liked that their kids would grow up seeing Islam in action, building communities and helping anyone who showed up at the Muslim Center—returning citizens, addicts, the homeless. The neighborhood wasn't perfect, but it was improving. Imam Ceesay had pledged to move there one day (Imam El-Amin, dealing with health issues, participates any way he can), and Crain thought their model could be used to bring people of all economic, racial, and religious backgrounds to other parts of Detroit.

But that was a different dream. ■

After the Dream: Waverly Street, rebuilt and revitalized.

DREAM OF DETROIT

(continued from page 15)

out of high school and not learn about the colonization of Native people is not right."

Research shows that Native kids are more likely to thrive, to stay out of trouble and stay in school, when they learn about their culture and language. To that end, a small but growing number of states like Washington now encourage or require that Indian Education be taught to all students, at all levels of schooling. To expand such teaching nationwide, this past spring the Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian launched Native Knowledge 360, a free online resource of interactive lessons and educational resources that teachers of all grades and subject areas can use.

Kids also need champions and advocates, said Sheldon Spotted Elk, director of Indian Child Welfare at Casey Family Programs. He pointed to the work of Eileen Quintana, a celebrated Title VI administrator in Utah who, through her Ute dancing classes and dedication to students, is credited with raising American Indian graduation rates in her district from 37 percent when she started 20 years ago to 100 percent last year. A bill introduced earlier this year in the US Senate aims to develop more such teachers: It creates incentives, such as loan forgiveness and scholarships, for teachers who work in schools with a large population of Native students.

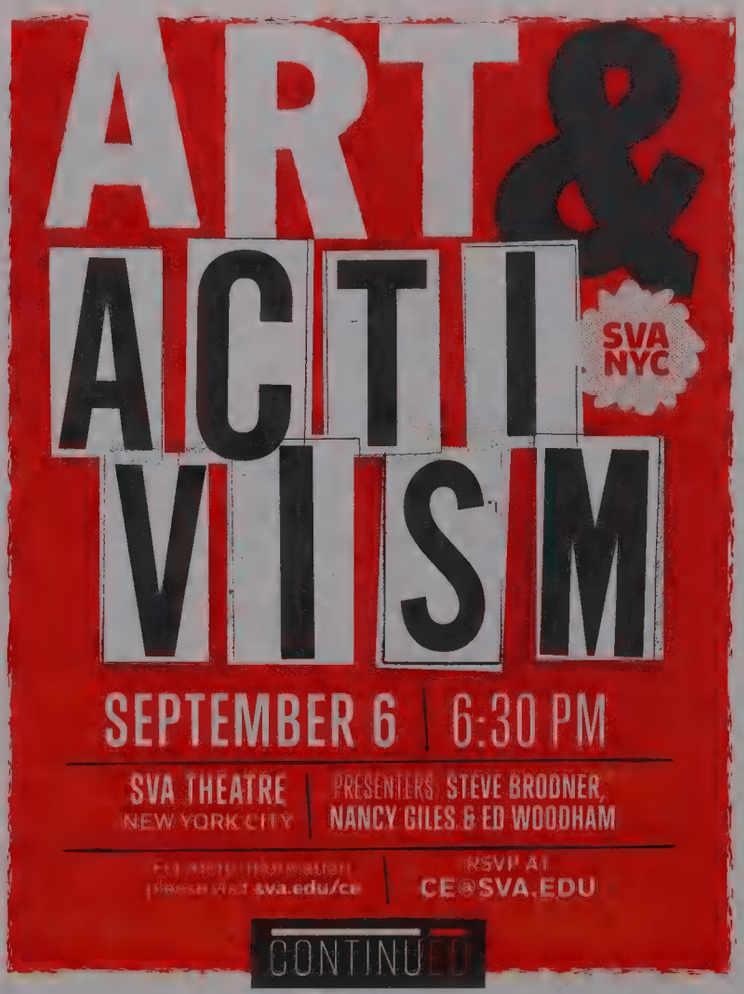
In 2016, the Obama administration signed a law that for the first time requires school districts to engage in "timely and meaningful consultation [with tribes] on issues affecting American Indian and Alaska Native students" or risk losing federal aid. Such partnerships may help to keep Native kids in school and supported. For example, the Chickasaw Nation, based in Oklahoma, now receives notification from the school district when students are truant, triggering a tribally led process to contact families and provide wraparound services for the students to keep them in school.

So far, the Trump administration hasn't shown interest in improving the circumstances for Native students. Instead, the budget proposed by Education Secretary Betsy DeVos would eliminate more than $4 billion from the programs that support Native kids. DeVos advocates a voucher system, which would provide students with public money to attend private schools. But to use these vouchers, most tribal students would have to travel more than 70 miles round-trip to get to and from school. DeVos also promotes virtual schools like the trailer in Warm Springs, where students learn primarily from computer programs.

Back on the Warm Springs Reservation, the incoming superintendent of the 509J School District, Ken Parshall, told me that he is "passionate about making brighter outcomes for my students." A pilot program launched this past year helps the current support staff earn a teaching license; one Native teacher from that program is now applying for a job with the district.

Failure doesn't have to be a destiny for Native American students. Savannah Holliday, the student who was expelled in every year of middle school, went on to receive a full scholarship to Southern Oregon University, where she plans to study forensic pathology. She credited her success to her mother and her participation in a traditional-dancing group.

When we met, Holliday was wearing her traditional dress, bedecked with purple and blue beads and shells. "In order to be successful, you need to know who you are," she said. "The dances help me identify who I am and where I come from. Everything at Madras High School is not of my culture, but at dance practice I fit in, and I feel less alone." ■



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(continued from page 2)

Klein suggests a list of progressive objectives. I suggest a slightly modified list: single-payer health insurance; the use of 100 percent renewable energy; a guaranteed pension; an adequate wage for anyone willing to work and maintenance for those who are unable; 90 percent reduction of the military budget; no foreign wars; revenue raised primarily by taxing wealth, secondarily by taxing income, and never by taxing sales.

Many similar lists could be gathered. My hunch is that they would all be pretty much the same. If so, then clearly the first answer to "What is to be done?" is a manifesto endorsed by all the progressive organizations.

One useful step in the process might be the exchange of "progressive" in favor of "social-democratic" (or, if we dare, "democratic socialist"). And, sadly, taking a lesson from the Bernie Sanders campaign compared with third-party attempts, the only chance for democratic socialism to become a reality is if it gestates from within the Democratic Party.

LINDRITH CORDELL
EVERGREEN, COLO.

The Nation's July 3/10 issue was brilliant, especially Naomi Klein's article. I wouldn't use the term "redistribution," though, as Klein does, to demonstrate the kind of "powerful words" progressives should not be afraid to use. "Redistribution" implies that plutocracy is normative while economic justice is not. The underlying moral principle is plain: No one's wealth should come at the price of another's hunger, nakedness, or homelessness. Once that line is crossed, property becomes theft, and the practitioners become thieves.

JOHN RABY
NEW LONDON, N.H.

Eating the Environment

Given the recent events regarding the Paris climate agreement, it is not surprising that the July 3/10 issue of *The Nation* featured several items mentioning climate change and the role of the fossil-fuel industry in carbon emissions. Also not surprising, none of these pieces placed importance on the role that the animal agriculture industry plays in climate change and environmental destruction. I am writing to suggest that *The Nation* make an effort to educate its readers on the environmental consequences of their dietary habits in addition to those of their fossil-fuel consumption. Aside from the issues of animal rights, here are just a few talking points: Methane gas is a more powerful greenhouse gas and leaves the atmosphere more quickly than CO_2; using farmland to grow food for people rather than nonhuman animals would dramatically increase available food production; livestock herding/grazing is a major contributor to deforestation; water consumption in animal agriculture is shockingly high. I hope that these considerations will be included in future pieces on climate change.

ANDREW RICHARDSON
NORMAN, OKLA.

Correction

A recent edition of "The Score" ["Soaring Prices," July 17/24] inaccurately described the increase in airfare costs in Canada and the United Kingdom after those countries privatized air-traffic control. Though fares did increase, it was the air-traffic-control fees (a portion of the ticket price) that increased by 59 percent in Canada and by 30 percent in the UK, not the overall fares.

Books & the Arts.

EVAN VUCCI / AP PHOTO

Scott Walker and Paul Ryan in Janesville, Wisconsin, during a Mitt Romney rally in 2012.

IN LA FOLLETTE TERRITORY

How did the Democrats lose a once progressive and populist hotbed like Wisconsin?

by SARAH JONES

"Prosperity hasn't always come easily," Barack Obama told the people of Janesville, Wisconsin, in 2008. At that point a candidate in the Democratic primaries, and with the recession still months away, Obama had come to promise the city's beleaguered General Motors workers that their plant would survive threatened cuts. Through "great challenge and great change, the promise of Janesville has been the promise of America—that our prosperity can and must be the tide that lifts every boat; that we rise or fall as one nation; that our economy is strongest when our middle-class grows and opportunity is spread as widely as possible."

This scene appears early in Amy Goldstein's new book *Janesville*, and it precedes the chain of horrors that came in the wake of the financial crisis. The GM plant closed. Suicides in the county doubled. Children became

Janesville
An American Story
By Amy Goldstein
Simon & Schuster. 368 pp. $27

The Politics of Resentment
Rural Consciousness in Wisconsin and the Rise of Scott Walker
By Katherine J. Cramer
University of Chicago Press. 256 pp. $30

Sarah Jones is the social-media editor of the New Republic, *where she frequently writes on politics and religion.*

homeless. The 2008 financial crisis is frequently reduced to a matter of statistics and graphs, which makes Goldstein's extensive reporting so valuable and, at times, moving. Her work, stretching from 2008 to 2016, tells Janesville's story through the struggles of the local families. By emphasizing the effects of economic collapse on family life, Goldstein's narrative doubles as a sort of generational saga: It humanizes the worst economic crisis of contemporary times by chronicling the enormous pressures it placed on several generations of Janesville residents.

Along with Katherine J. Cramer's *The Politics of Resentment*, *Janesville* also helps answer a question that has been plaguing political commentators since last November: Why did Donald Trump win in Wisconsin? Everyone has a theory—Hillary Clinton's campaign strategies, Trump's appeal to protectionism, GOP voter suppression—and most of them have some truth. But one must also understand Wisconsin, a so-called purple state with a stark urban/rural divide, if one is to understand the national rage that swept Trump into the White House.

The two authors take different approaches. Goldstein is a journalist for *The Washington Post*, and *Janesville* is essentially a work of reportage, drawn from interviews and research conducted in the city at the center of the book. Cramer is a political scientist at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, and her book is a study of public opinion; she gleans her findings from observations of small group discussions in rural communities across the state. But these two different accounts of Wisconsin complement, rather than contradict, each other. Read together, they also illuminate the state's Republican shift and chart a way forward for reversing it.

Goldstein begins her narrative in the winter of 2008, two days before Christmas. Janesville's GM plant—the one that Obama had promised would stay open—has been shut down, producing the last Chevy Tahoe its workers would ever build. But the citizens of Janesville still think this is only temporary: The recession has just dawned, and like most people across the country, they believe a recovery is imminent. The city's assembly line had survived past fluctuations in the auto industry, and Goldstein reports that this nurtured a stubborn optimism among Janesville's residents. One of the people she followed was an auto worker named Jerad Whiteaker: "As a GM'er," she writes, "unemployment benefits and union layoff pay will nearly equal his wages. They will carry his family through, he expects, until he finds work that he enjoys more."

Whiteaker and many others in Janesville didn't anticipate the scale of the city's economic collapse in the wake of the plant's closure and the financial crash. Goldstein reports that roughly 9,000 people in and near Janesville lost their jobs in 2008 and 2009, meaning that a little over 14 percent of the city's population (at that point, 63,540 people) were unemployed by 2010. And these were not just individual tragedies: Most workers had families to support, and the plant's closure stranded them in a flailing job market with skills that didn't necessarily transfer to other industries.

Many in Janesville, and in other industrial towns like it, learned that it wasn't so easy for the newly unemployed to pull themselves up by their proverbial bootstraps. Whiteaker, for example, tries retraining as a lineman, then takes a miserable job at a jail before finding work as a forklift driver; his teenage children take on multiple minimum-wage jobs. Some General Motors employees accept transfers to factories outside Janesville, forcing them to spend little time with their families, while others swell the classrooms of Blackhawk Tech, a local community college, to retrain for other industries. A few sell their possessions in order to make their mortgage payments.

Goldstein's straightforward narrative gives the lie to a beloved neoliberal bromide: that a person's hard work—no matter the shape or structure of the economy—will guarantee a tolerable standard of living. Lose your job? Get new training. No jobs in your town? Move to another one. When the market self-corrects, the argument goes, workers must self-correct along with it, retraining for new jobs in an ever-changing economy. But what Goldstein's book captures is the limits of these individual self-corrections: Without a broader social safety net, the citizens of Janesville struggle to stay afloat no matter what type of skills they acquire.

That Janesville's hard-hit workers can't pull themselves up by their bootstraps underscores an irony specific to the city: Its most famous native son, the Republican House Speaker Paul Ryan, has dedicated his political career to promoting the supply-side pieties that helped create the recession. The people of Janesville want to work; they are willing to be flexible and take jobs that fracture their families and sap their psyches. But this just isn't enough—something more significant is broken. For most residents of Janesville, the problem isn't a willingness to work; it's the lack of economic opportunity.

When Kristi Beyer and Barb Vaughn lose their jobs at the local Lear plant, they go back to school to change industries. Similarly, Whiteaker hates the work that he performs at GM, a sentiment he shares with other GM workers in his family. But he values the opportunities that the job gives him, in part because it's unionized and therefore a path to middle-class security—but also because he has resigned himself to the fact that most work is arduous. When he loses his job at the GM plant, he is basically willing to take any other job available.

Another GM'er, Matt Wopat, becomes a "Janesville Gypsy," one of the group of local men who, in the wake of the plant's closure, are forced to spend five days a week working in various GM factories out of state. He does this not because he has a specific emotional attachment to GM or to the labor of producing automobiles; he tries community college and a career change before deciding semi-nomadism is an acceptable price to pay for a GM pension and for the ability to sustain his family.

In this way, Goldstein's book offers an overdue corrective to the common coastal perceptions of Midwestern discontent. Conservative rhetoric and right-wing anger don't map the lives of Janesville residents in any discernible way. Despite the rightward shift in their state, many in Janesville see organized labor as a positive and necessary force in their lives. They credit union pensions for their comfortable retirements, and they value the collective bargaining that enables their wages to pay for a mortgage and the occasional family vacation. They lead middle-class lives because of the union's work, and they know it. As a result, their anger and frustration are not directed toward those institutions that represent their interests.

Janesville also exposes the limits of charity as a way to resolve the devastating effects of an often unstable economy whose benefits are unequally distributed. An annual food drive provides the Whiteakers with occasional meals, but it cannot address chronic food insecurity. Its success depends largely on an army of union volunteers navigating their own tough times. The fortunes of charities, as Goldstein's book reminds us, are tied to those of the communities they serve: In an unemployment crisis, most people can't afford to donate what little

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–David and Abigail, Mich. (Cuba 2016)

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they do have. And either way, free clothes and hot meals cannot provide the financial backbone that families need to survive.

Goldstein ends her book with a look at Janesville in 2016—a year in which President Obama and the Democrats frequently congratulated themselves for adding roughly 2 million jobs to the economy. But *Janesville* reveals the illusory nature of that post-recession growth. The same young people who relied on annual food drives are now trapped in student-loan debt. The Whiteakers' twin daughters, Alyssa and Kayzia, graduate near the top of their class despite working their way through high school. But neither is able to afford the state university's tuition without loans, and Alyssa takes out $17,000 a year to pay for an engineering degree. "That moment when you feel like the people who are in charge of education don't want you to receive one," she posts on her Facebook page. "I hate working my butt off to have to figure out a way to get the education I deserve." So much for bootstraps.

Goldstein doesn't editorialize, but the stories she relates inescapably support the left's conclusion that charity and worker retraining are no real substitutes for the redistribution of wealth. The people in towns like Janesville need a stronger welfare state: Policies like single-payer health care, a higher minimum wage, and some combination of a universal basic income and a federal jobs guarantee would stretch a safety net over the abyss. Another aspect of Janesville's story reinforces this position: By demanding a fair share of the profits earned at local plants, UAW Local 95 created security for many Janesville families. It could only do so much, however, and the union's power waned as the local industries it represented began to die. But it kept many Janesville families out of immediate poverty and deserves much credit both for the results of its collective bargaining and for the political legacy it bequeathed Janesville. The union, after all, is one reason that Janesville hangs on to its affiliation with the Democratic Party, and why many of its residents have vocally opposed Governor Scott Walker's attacks on the collective-bargaining rights of public employees.

But the benefits of organized labor do not extend to the less industrialized areas of the state. In poorer, more rural communities, the successful tactics of unions like Janesville's UAW Local 95 are a cause for envy—and they can become fodder for a conservative backlash. This backlash, and the divisions between urban and rural working-class Wisconsinites, are the phenomena that Katherine Cramer has spent years attempting to capture, and it is at the center of *The Politics of Resentment*, which collects years of her fieldwork in rural Wisconsin.

Published in March 2016, Cramer's book is creative and engaging. She conducts her research almost like a journalist, insinuating herself into small groups in rural communities across the state. It's a cultural adjustment for her, she admits, but from 2007 to 2012, she visits local gatherings—some poor, some middle-class—in roughly two dozen rural communities to find out why the support for redistribution remains so low despite widening income inequality. What Cramer uncovers is something often overlooked by the Beltway commentariat: that what has led to the rightward swing in Wisconsin politics is not just deindustrialization, but a sharp urban/rural divide that is shaped by an attitude she calls "rural consciousness…an identity as a rural person that includes much more than an attachment to place." This consciousness transcends economic status and is strongly influenced by resentment toward those living in cities—as Cramer describes it, "a sense that decision makers routinely ignore rural places and fail to give rural communities their fair share of resources, as well as a sense that rural folks are fundamentally different from urbanites in terms of lifestyles, values, and work ethic."

There are some cultural reasons for this resentment, but mostly it's about money. Cramer's subjects believe they're unfairly taxed and largely ignored by the state and federal government, which concentrate their resources on urban centers. As a result, these people evince a special contempt for the government as well as for public employees—a category that includes teachers and university faculty and staff in addition to government workers. In dice games, in coffee klatches, and at breakfast, these rural Wisconsinites tell Cramer that government jobs are soft and overcompensated—evidence, they believe, of "greedy unions" and an institutionalized malice against blue-collar workers.

"I'd have a better chance working till sixty-seven being a teacher and not doing any physical work than being out in the woods working," one logger tells her in 2009, adding: "At sixty-five years old you're worn out. You should be able to retire." Another asserts, "The people that do have health insurance don't realize" how lucky they are. Cramer concludes: "People in small towns resented university employees in general because they received great benefits." But instead of hoping to unionize or receive the benefits of a more expansive, redistributionist government, these people believe that the only solution is to limit the power of organized labor in Wisconsin politics and shrink both the state and federal government.

Here we behold the great liberal nemesis: the conservative poor person who votes against his or her own interests. But Cramer injects some welcome nuance into the caricature. She concludes from her fieldwork that rural support for small government is due less to a specific political philosophy and more to a generalized distrust of government. "A person can be highly critical of the people currently in government or current government procedures while at the same time believing in principle that society ought to invest heavily in government, even beyond defense," she notes. It's an astute point: Her subjects resent government principally because they don't believe it works for them. In this view, voting Republican doesn't contradict their interests; they vote for people like Scott Walker and Paul Ryan because they think the Republican vision of a pared-down government will ultimately benefit them.

Nor is their skepticism regarding how the government is currently run entirely misplaced. Income inequality *is* growing, with a greater share of wealth concentrated in America's richest families. There is also a geographical divide: Many rural communities have taken a longer time to recover from the recession than cities. Government funding, channeled through agencies like the Appalachian Regional Commission, has helped to develop rural areas, but it hasn't resolved the structural inequalities that cripple many of their economies.

Cramer's subjects attribute this to malice, but there's not much evidence to support that conclusion. Rural problems, as Cramer notes, can be blamed on the specific features of rural economies in contemporary America and to the thinness of our social safety net more generally. But that can be difficult to see from the perspective that her subjects share, and so it's no surprise that they identify government as the enemy. And here again, they aren't completely wrong: The federal government doesn't currently spend money in ways that benefit rural people. Rural communities have problems that can't be

solved without big government, but the government doesn't dispense funding in ways that actually help these communities. If the Democratic Party wants to rebuild trust in rural areas—if it wants to win back states like Wisconsin—then it has to develop robust social policies that address rural needs.

That task won't be easy, especially given the different economies and geographies of a state like Wisconsin. And it will take years of work to bridge the long-standing resentments and frustrations that have created the gulf between urban and rural working people. In Janesville, UAW Local 95 provided the class-conscious political education that these rural communities lack. It's not clear from Cramer's narrative that groups with similar reach are organizing rural communities, and it's an absence reflected in the statements that her subjects make to her. They complain about low wages, expensive health care, and underfunded public schools—but they fear that higher taxes will bankrupt them. "There ain't shit here," one logger tells her.

Untapped resentment leads to political failure, and in Wisconsin, the rightward swing was under way long before the current president rode his Trump Tower escalator into history. Rural Wisconsin celebrated Scott Walker's assault on state government and organized labor as a long-overdue comeuppance, and in 2016 it turned out to vote for Trump. Janesville did not, though Goldstein notes that in comparison with previous years, many did not vote at all.

There's no way to know exactly why voters stayed home. But the work of Goldstein and Cramer does underscore the flaws of Hillary Clinton's famous retort to Trump, that "America is already great." For many Americans—urban and rural—the American dream feels more like a dispiriting fugue state at best, at worst a daily struggle to provide the barest necessities of life. The hard work of Janesville residents hasn't brought them lasting prosperity; their boats did not lift; their fortunes, like those of their rural neighbors, are limited and precarious.

The left offers the policies and the movement-building solidarity that Wisconsin's working-class residents—urban and rural—require. And despite decades of red-baiting and an increasingly entrenched Republican Party in the state, Wisconsin isn't necessarily rocky ground for the left. After all, left politics once thrived there: In Milwaukee, for example, socialists effectively ran the city government from 1910 to 1940, and the city elected another socialist mayor, Frank Zeidler, from 1948 to 1960. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Robert La Follette dominated Wisconsin politics due to his unyielding egalitarianism, itself the outgrowth of a broader left-populist turn in the upper Midwest. La Follette used his time in office—he served as governor, congressional representative, and senator at various points in his career—to lobby for campaign-spending limits and higher taxes on industry, and against foreign intervention, a record that urban-policy scholar Peter Dreier credits for later influencing the platforms of Franklin Roosevelt, Floyd Olson, and Fiorello La Guardia. La Follette's agrarian populism and state-centered progressivism shaped Wisconsin's political culture for much of the 20th century, and it is proof that a radical egalitarian politics need not be limited to the "sewer socialism" of Milwaukee's democratic-socialist heyday.

The work of populists like La Follette provide something of a blueprint for left organizing, in the state and elsewhere. We are reckoning now with a new Gilded Age, and La Follette's vision appears relevant not only for the people of Wisconsin but for much of the country. An expansion of the federal government's services—Medicare for All, a universal basic income, a federal jobs guarantee, or some combination of the three—would benefit rural Wisconsin as well as cities like Janesville. And it could help the Democrats win back other states with a similar urban/rural divide.

But the Democrats can't realize these goals until the party embraces the frustration felt by many working-class voters, who believe (not without cause) that both major parties have abandoned them. The challenge for Democrats is to find a way—much as Wisconsin's populists and socialists did a century ago—to direct this anger at the right enemies, and to channel it into constructive pursuits. *Janesville* and *The Politics of Resentment* not only document the corrosive effects of our own Gilded Age: They also show us just how quickly anger can transform the political landscape of a state. But that anger isn't the exclusive province of the vaunted working-class white voter; it is shared by working-class people of all races and ethnic groups. Nor is it necessarily a predictor of chaos or fuel for the far right. Instead, it's an opportunity for the left to seize. ■

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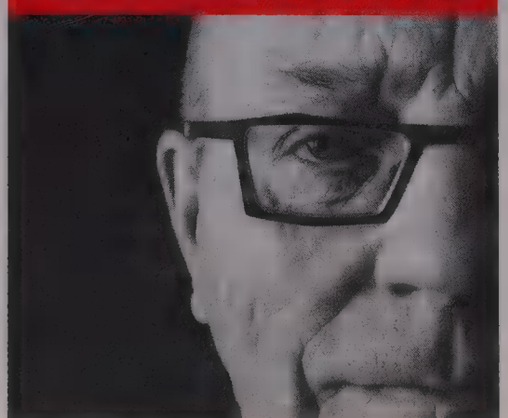

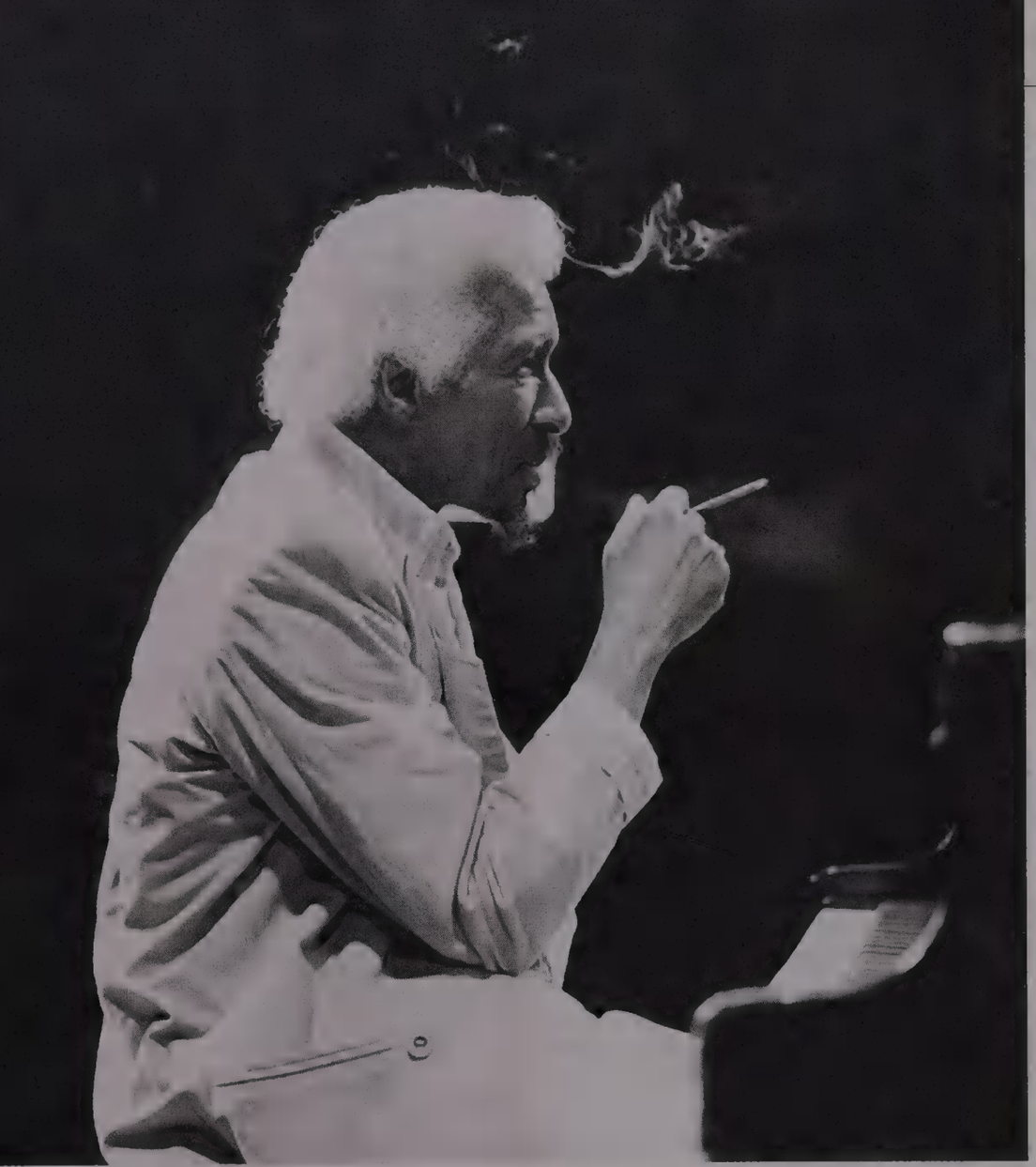

Mal Waldron performing in Amsterdam in 1995.

FREE AT LAST

Mal Waldron's ecstatic minimalism

by ADAM SHATZ

On July 17, 1959, Frank O'Hara, shaken by the news of Billie Holiday's death, wrote a poem, "The Day Lady Died." In the last two lines, he remembers leaning against the bathroom door at the Five Spot, a jazz club in the East Village, "while she whispered a song along the keyboard / to Mal Waldron and everyone and I stopped breathing." Seldom has the power of jazz performance been conveyed with such speed and grace. Holiday and Waldron, her pianist, are having a conversation so quiet and so intimate that listening to it feels like eavesdropping. I have always loved this poem for what it reveals not only about Holiday's stagecraft, but also about her affection for Waldron, who accompanied her from 1957 until her death. Holiday and Waldron were close friends as well as collaborators. Waldron helped her write the autobiographical ballad "Left Alone," an account of romantic desolation that she never had the chance to record. He had known of Holiday's addiction, but, as he put it, "Lady Day had an awful lot to forget," and his debt to her was incalculable. She taught him the importance of a song's lyrics: Words, as much as notes, could lend themselves to musical improvisation. The magic she worked with them rubbed off. To listen to Waldron is to feel as if he is speaking to you, and only you, because he never forgets the lyrical content of a song.

The Opening
Mal Waldron
Futura. 42 minutes

Meditations
Live at Dug
Mal Waldron
Victor/Somethin' Cool. 45 minutes

Waldron was 33 when Lady died. He would live another 44 years, but for many jazz fans he would always remain Holiday's accompanist. He frequently recorded her songs, spoke of their friendship in interviews, and insisted that if she had moved to Europe, as he did, she would have lived a much longer life. Waldron's devotion to her memory reflected not only his love for her, but also the knowledge that he had been given a second chance: Four years after her death, he survived a near-fatal nervous breakdown after a heroin overdose. He experienced his survival as a rebirth, but was left with a piercing sense of life's fragility. "When you take our life span and measure it against eternity it is only a small dot," he wrote. "In this time we must realize, if possible, our fullest self potential."

Waldron used his time well, creating one of the most distinctive bodies of work in postwar music. He wrote hundreds of songs, most famously "Soul Eyes," a lush 32-bar ballad dedicated to John Coltrane (who liked it so much that he recorded it no less than three times). Waldron had a big sound and loved the resonances of his instrument, but he worked almost exclusively in small-group settings, preferring their chamber-like intimacy to larger, brassier ensembles. The best way to hear him is either in a duet with one of his favorite partners (his recordings with the saxophonists Steve Lacy and Marion Brown are especially memorable) or by himself.

Waldron was a lifelong student of classical piano—he often played sonatas for pleasure, and recorded pieces by Chopin, Brahms, Satie, and Bartók—and he brought a classical sense of form and introspection to his solo work. Two long-out-of-print solo-concert albums—*The Opening* and *Meditations*—were recently reissued, and they bear witness, in different ways, to the dark, wintry beauty of Waldron's art. *The Opening*, a fiery 1970 concert at the American Cultural Center in Paris, features six original compositions, mostly based on ostinatos—vamps that Waldron plays over and again—with small but engrossing variations in tempo, dynamics, timbre, and rhythmic articulation. (One is called "Of Pigs and Panthers," an allusion to the war back home between the

Adam Shatz is a contributing editor at the London Review of Books. *He dedicates this essay to the memory of Geri Allen.*

police and the Black Panther Party.) *Meditations*, recorded two years later at a jazz club in Tokyo, is a more contemplative affair, bookended by two of Waldron's best-known pieces on solitude, "All Alone" and "Left Alone."

Waldron's style is invariably described as "brooding"—almost all of his pieces are in a minor key—but it could also be described as analytical. Most jazz pianists work to create an effect of outward motion when they improvise. Swing, after all, is a musical analogue of dance, and its aim is to make the body more expansive and supple. Waldron's music appears to work in nearly the opposite direction, burrowing ever more deeply into its materials: He seems to be on an inward journey. In "The Blues Suite," for example, the slow, winding song that takes up more than a third of *Meditations*, there's an extraordinary moment where Waldron plays a descending figure in the lower registers of the piano; as it recedes, a sample from the Negro spiritual "Wade in the Water" rises in its wake, suggesting a shadowy recollection, or the previously erased layer of a palimpsest.

Waldron "played every piece as if he were X-raying it," as Edward Said once observed of Glenn Gould. He turned to music as a kind of mental exercise, a way of figuring out what he thought; his pieces were almost all "meditations." "I want to be able to see what I am doing," he explained, "and in order to be very clear in my mind where I am going I have to repeat it." His search for what he called the "one note that goes for the entire piece" gives his music an almost uniquely obsessive sense of propulsion—the feeling of being in a trance.

The son of West Indian immigrants, Malcolm Waldron was born in 1925 in Harlem and moved shortly after with his family to Jamaica, Queens. His father worked for the Long Island Rail Road and his mother was a nurse; both were middle-class strivers. They wanted, as Waldron later recalled, to "keep me off the streets" and forced him to take piano lessons from the age of 6. He was a quick study: "Fear is a great motivator," he said.

Waldron was drafted into the Army in 1943 and was stationed at West Point, where he worked in the equestrian services. Whenever he was on leave, he made the scene, going to the clubs on 52nd Street and in Harlem, where he heard the pianists Art Tatum and Bud Powell, both of whom would be important influences. After the war, Waldron enrolled at Queens College on the GI Bill. There, he studied composition with Karol Rathaus, an exiled Jewish Austrian composer who recoiled from the orthodoxies of both tonal music and Schoenbergian serialism. Rathaus was also an admirer of jazz and the author of an essay, "Jazzdämmerung?" ("The Twilight of Jazz?"), that accused George Gershwin and the swing-band leader Paul Whiteman of "cultural larceny" for Europeanizing black music.

Under Rathaus's tutelage, Waldron listened to Bach, Stravinsky, and Ravel; he also began to write his first scores. In the evenings, he received a different sort of education at the Paradiso, a Harlem club not far from Minton's Playhouse, headquarters of the bebop movement. At the time, Waldron was playing alto saxophone, not piano: He had picked up the horn after hearing Charlie Parker, whom, like other young bop musicians, he worshipped. By his mid-20s, however, he'd returned to the piano. The saxophone, he realized, was "a very exhibitionist instrument, and you had to be extroverted, and I was very introverted." In *A Portrait of Mal Waldron*, a 1997 documentary by the Belgian filmmaker Tom Van Overberghe, Waldron describes how the piano allowed him to hide, to "play very quietly and work out your changes. It's a very beautiful instrument for a person like me."

In the early 1950s, Waldron paid his dues in a style of music that could hardly have been less introverted, accompanying soul-jazz bands led by the down-home saxophonists Ike Quebec and George Walker "Big Nick" Nicholas. But he was also studying the work of bebop's most original pianist and composer, Thelonious Monk. At first, Monk's style sounded, to Waldron, "so strange, the way he hit the piano," but "it just grew on me," and he became one of the few pianists to absorb Monk's innovations—his flat-fingered attack; his way of "bending" notes by striking two adjacent keys but only releasing one; his radical use of space—without sounding like a Monk imitator.

Waldron's ability to combine Bud Powell's fleet, lyrical approach to "comping"—the art of playing behind a soloist—with Monk's more angular and idiosyncratic style made him a favorite pianist of the most sophisticated hard-bop musicians. Charles Mingus recruited him in 1954 to his Jazz Workshop and featured him on his landmark 1956 album, *Pithecanthropus Erectus*. The same year, Waldron was hired as the house pianist at Prestige Records, where he played on albums by Jackie McLean, John Coltrane, and other stars of the era. A young father, Waldron also had to find other work, and he supported his family by laying down tracks for Music Minus One, a maker of sing-along and play-along records. Each morning, he reported for work at Music Minus One in a suit and tie, looking more like an accountant than a musician. At night he was out gigging, sometimes with Billie Holiday; sometimes with the many reedmen who appreciated his discreet yet forceful comping; and sometimes with beatniks like Allen Ginsberg and Lenny Bruce.

But Waldron hungered for something more than work as a sideman. A talented sheet composer, he wanted to write his own music. While he was careful to avoid the often arid contrivances of third-stream jazz, he shared its ambition to incorporate classical compositional ideas into jazz, and to move beyond the formulaic theme-solos-theme structure of hard bop. His 1959 album *Impressions*, a trio recording with Addison Farmer on bass and Albert "Tootie" Heath on drums, was his first great statement as a leader, revealing a probing young modernist composer and a daring improviser. Holiday's influence can be keenly felt in his reading of Jimmy van Heusen's "All the Way," a song she loved, and in Waldron's own composition, "Overseas Suite," which was inspired by his recent European tour with her.

But in *Impressions* we also hear the accompanist emerging from Lady's shadow. In it, Waldron depends less on chord changes—the foundation of bebop improvisation—than on clusters of notes and "whatever enriches the sound." He was somewhat more tentative than Miles Davis and Ornette Coleman, both of whom released revolutionary albums in 1959, *Kind of Blue* and *The Shape of Jazz to Come*. But Waldron was just as eager to embrace the new freedoms. As he saw, they went hand in hand with being a black musician in the era of civil rights. The bar lines in a song were, he recalled, like "going to jail for us." "We were talking about freedom, and getting out of jails.... So everyone wanted to escape from that."

Waldron cut an alluring figure for the new jazz modernism emerging in the 1950s: He was slender, with regal features, an elegant bearing, and haunting eyes. Along with Sidney Poitier and Miles Davis, he was one of the original black male sex symbols of the 1950s, a precursor of the "Black is beautiful" era. On the cover of *Impressions*, Waldron, wearing a suit, tie, and rain jacket, stands behind a ladder against a dark, purple-tinted backdrop. He looks backward, with a somewhat nervous expression: an image of the dissident energies gathering force at the end of the Eisenhower era.

Billie Holiday died a few months after *Impressions* was released. Waldron was devastated. She was his young daughter's godmother, and "such a warm person I began to feel she was like my sister." A year later, Waldron released *Left Alone*, a tribute to Holiday's work, whose title track

featured a gorgeous performance by Jackie McLean. Released from his duties as an accompanist, Waldron began over the next few years to come into his own. He played a historic two-week date at the Five Spot with one of the most exciting bands of the 1960s, a quintet led by the multi-reedman Eric Dolphy and the trumpeter Booker Little, which also featured the drummer Ed Blackwell (of the Ornette Coleman Quartet) and the bassist Richard Davis. He also contributed to some of the great civil-rights jazz albums made by the drummer Max Roach and his partner, the singer Abbey Lincoln. (Waldron wrote the music to Lincoln's protest song "Straight Ahead," in which she sang, with bitter eloquence: "If you got to use the back roads / Straight ahead can lead nowhere.") He demonstrated his gifts as a composer of small-ensemble jazz on the ambitious 1961 album *The Quest*, which explored waltzes, ballads, bop syncopation, even 12-tone serialism. The modal composition "Warm Canto," a miniature jewel that showcased Dolphy's clarinet and Ron Carter's pizzicato work on cello, looked forward to the epic tone poems Waldron would write in the 1970s. On *The Quest*, he also developed what the singer Jeanne Lee later described as his "orchestral way of hearing."

But Holiday's death caught up with him—or rather, her habits did. Waldron had been horrified to see the Lady "treated like a criminal" rather than the victim of a disease, an experience that "broke her down." It broke him down, too. Many Americans assumed that he must be a drug addict, simply because he was a jazz musician, and "it got to the point where if you had the name you just had to have the game, too." In 1963, while on tour with Roach and Lincoln, he went onstage loaded on heroin, and froze. For the next six months, he was hospitalized at East Elmhurst Hospital and subjected to shock therapy and spinal taps. He could scarcely remember who he was, much less how to play piano. Yet he was grateful: The alternative was worse. And in the wake of his overdose and nervous breakdown, Waldron bit by bit began to come back to life.

His hands trembled, and he had lost his sense of time. But he applied himself with diligence, listening to his recordings and writing out his earlier improvisations on paper. His work as a composer of sheet music would sustain him for the next two years, until he was ready to perform again. He wrote scores for Shirley Clarke's *The Cool World* and Herbert Danska's *Sweet Love, Bitter* (loosely inspired by Charlie Parker's last years, and starring Dick Gregory). But there were rumors that he was dead, and Waldron wasn't sure they were false. He was surrounded by casualties of the jazz life: Booker Little had died of kidney failure, at 23, in 1961; three years later, Eric Dolphy died, at 36, of an undiagnosed diabetic coma in a Berlin hospital, where doctors mistook him for a drug addict and left him in bed so the drugs could run their course.

During these years, work in the New York clubs became increasingly hard to come by because, as he recalled, "the white musicians got the jobs, and the black musicians didn't get the jobs even if they had more talent." When Marcel Carné, the director of *Le Jour Se Lève*, asked him to come to Paris to write the soundtrack for his *Three Bedrooms in Manhattan*, an adaptation of a moody 1946 novel by Georges Simenon, he had no trouble making up his mind. "In America if you were black and a musician at the time, it was two strikes against you," Waldron said. "In Europe…it was two strikes for you." He found "so much respect and love" there that he "didn't need any drugs."

Waldron flew to Paris in 1965 and never looked back. He didn't return to the States, even to perform, until 1975. After scoring Carné's film, in which he also made a cameo as a barroom pianist, he bounced around France and Italy before settling, in 1967, in Munich. Two years later, he released one of his most important albums, the trio recording *Free at Last*, which also launched a new, Munich-based label, Editions of Contemporary Music (ECM), founded by a young German bassist, Manfred Eicher, who would become one of the great champions of the American jazz avant-garde.

On *Free at Last*, we hear a musician who has emancipated himself not only from America but from the overbearing influence of his mentors, particularly Bud Powell. Waldron's writing is simpler, stripped down to vamps of a few notes, "calls" designed to provoke improvisatory responses. Before the breakdown, he explained, he had "started out with a big tree and I tried shaving and shaving and shaving…to find the perfect toothpick, but…I was nowhere near the toothpick at that moment." His rhythms, meanwhile, became denser and more complex, his touch harder and more percussive, more "African." The mood of *Free at Last* was dark and fierce, radiating identity and purpose. Its idiosyncratic flow came from the drone-like effects that Waldron created by pounding chords with his left hand. They gave the music an expansive sense of space, as if it, too, could breathe more freely in exile.

The jazz historian John Litweiler has characterized Waldron's post-breakdown style as "repetition/transformation," a phrase that may remind some of Steve Reich and Philip Glass, who were experimenting at the same time with repetitive structures in the early works of Minimalism. But Waldron arrived at his version of Minimalism on his own, through sounds and techniques specific to African-American music—above all, the plaintive, ringing sound known as a "blues cry." An attempt to approximate the sound of a human voice with an instrument, the blues cry is a common expressive flourish in jazz, but Waldron transformed it into a structural device: He repeated it with different shadings, inflections, and intonations throughout his improvisations.

In *Free at Last* and *Black Glory*, a thrilling 1971 trio album, there are echoes of the free-jazz pianist Cecil Taylor—for whom Waldron would later write two tributes, "Free for C.T." and "Variations on a Theme by Cecil Taylor"—but the resemblance reflects kinship rather than influence: Waldron had not left behind hard bop to become anyone's disciple. Waldron meant "free at last" not only from American racism, or from chord structures, but from any restrictive influences—including the pianist he had been before his breakdown. One of the reasons that "I feel it necessary to play freer is that I believe no one is ever exactly the same as he was a moment ago," he explained at the time. "The change from moment to moment can be and usually is very small, almost unmeasurable, but nevertheless it is there. And since I'm definitely not the same person I was five years ago, I cannot pretend that nothing has changed by playing the same old way."

It's almost impossible to listen to *Free at Last* or any of the music that followed without thinking of the trial he had to survive to make it, just as one can hardly listen to *The Quartet for the End of Time* without reflecting on Olivier Messiaen's time in a prisoner-of-war camp, or *The Basement Tapes* without being reminded of Dylan's motorcycle accident. Survival is essential to its pathos, and to its consolatory power. Here is the sound of a man who has no intention of returning home, who has found not only a sanctuary, but renewal: a "second life," he called it.

Waldron would continue to explore his newfound freedoms in such rip-roaring anthems as "Sieg Haile" (dedicated to Haile Selassie), "La Gloire du Noir," and "Snake Out"; but he would also do so in ballads of disarming vulnerability and, not least, in his tributes to his late employer, notably *Blues for Lady Day*, recorded in 1972 in Holland. His melodic phrasing on the album, particularly in the stark, chilling interpretation of "Strange Fruit," is slow, stately, and unadorned, as if he were waiting for Holiday

to join him. Few purely instrumental albums have been so effective at conjuring the absent lyrics of its songs.

That Waldron not only reinvented himself but produced his greatest music outside of the States, in conditions of comparative dignity and respect, challenges a widespread assumption of jazz history: that the music diminishes in power the further it is removed from its vernacular sources. In 1949, Miles Davis bid farewell to the freedoms of post-liberation Paris to return to a segregated country, because "musicians who moved over there seemed to me to lose something, an energy, an edge, that living in the States gave them." The unspoken, *nostalgie de la boue* corollary of this belief is that adversity is the yeast of jazz creativity, that the comforts of expatriate life make musicians go soft. But for many jazz musicians, life abroad has meant exposure to new experiences and ideas. And more than any of his peers, Waldron embraced the perspective of exile within his music. A number of his compositions were postcards from places he had visited; his masterpiece was an ode to flight, inspired by a visit in the early 1970s to the Norwegian island city of Kristiansund, where each morning he had awakened to "watch the seagulls perform a ballet." He captured their dance in a languid reverie, "Seagulls of Kristiansund," built around two tone centers, E minor and A minor, recalling the French Impressionist composers he admired.

Like Debussy and Satie, Waldron was drawn to the pentatonic scale and to East Asian aesthetics, whose minimalism and refinement of gesture struck a chord. When he came to Tokyo for the first time in 1970 to record an album, he was already big in Japan, thanks to his 1959 tribute to Billie Holiday, *Left Alone*, which had been enormously popular there, and he returned many times, recording dozens of albums on Japanese labels. That many of the tunes Waldron wrote in Japan have Japanese titles indicates the strength of his attachment. A "natural mystic," as the singer Jeanne Lee described him, Waldron felt as if he had been there before, perhaps in a previous life. As it turned out, Japan's interest in his work meant less to him than his own interest in Japan. "They think I'm here for the gigs, but I'm really here for the temples," he once told a friend.

Waldron was particularly impressed by Ryoanji ("Temple of the Peaceful Dragon"), a 15th-century Zen Buddhist temple in north Kyoto. Ryoanji is famous for its rock garden, a classical example of *karesansui*, or dry landscape. Fifteen stones of varying sizes, composed into five groups, lie on a bed of white sand, which is raked each day by monks. The stones are arranged in such a way that only 14 can be seen at once; according to a proverb, only through attaining wisdom can one see the elusive 15th stone. For some, the garden depicts a group of islands floating on an ocean; for others, a mother tiger transporting her cubs over the sea. In its understated play of sameness and difference, movement and serenity, symmetry and asymmetry, Waldron found an analogue to his own music. The garden embodied what in Japanese is called *wabi-sabi*, an aesthetic of refined austerity, based on the beauty of imperfection and the acceptance of transience. John Cage, who first visited Ryoanji in 1962 with Yoko Ono and the pianist David Tudor, produced a series of compositions inspired by it, as well as dozens of drawings.

Waldron's tribute, "The Stone Garden of Ryoanji," on the recently reissued *Meditations*, was recorded in July 1972 at the Dug, a club in Tokyo. Located in the basement of an old building between two high-rises, the Dug was a sanctuary for music lovers, writers, and bohemians; it was the kind of place where, as a young woman in Haruki Murakami's novel *Norwegian Wood* remarks, "They don't make you feel embarrassed to be drinking in the afternoon." The song begins with a simple, almost childlike theme, suggestive of Japanese folk music as filtered through Satie, but it moves into a richly involving set of blues variations, examined and observed from every conceivable angle, as if Waldron were in search of the invisible 15th stone. Its beauty comes from the rapt, almost relentless attention to melodic line that was Waldron's signature, and because the song won't let him go, it won't let us go, either. Much of the music that Waldron made in Japan in the early 1970s can be heard as the expression of an impossible farewell, "forecasting my feelings about leaving this island paradise," as he wrote of his ballad "Sayonara," which appeared on his 1970 album *Tokyo Reverie*.

A self-described "born gypsy," Waldron was used to farewells. He spent most of his time on the road, returning now and then to Munich and Brussels, where he moved in the late 1980s. But Japan would always have a special claim on his imagination, and he went there as often as he could. He met his second wife, Hiromi, with whom he had three children, on a visit to Tokyo in the early 1980s. And in 1995, he went to Japan on an official invitation for the 50th anniversary of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. He was joined by the entire Waldron clan, including Hiromi's two children from her first marriage; his first wife, Elaine; and their two adult daughters. Waldron performed in a trio with Jeanne Lee and the flutist Toru Tenda at temples, concert halls, and community centers from Tokyo to Okinawa. Lee, in her liner notes to *Travellin' in Soul-Time*, the album that came out of this tour, remembers that "at one point, there were more Waldrons on the train than other passengers."

Like John Coltrane, who visited Japan in 1966, Waldron was overwhelmed by the Hiroshima Peace Memorial. It was not just the evidence of destruction but the story it told of resilience, atonement, and rebuilding—one for which, as another kind of survivor, he felt a great affinity. For the 50th anniversary, he composed a suite based on "The White Road," a poem by Syo Ito, a 14-year-old survivor of Hiroshima, and on *Black Rain*, a novel by Masuji Ibuse about the radioactive rain that fell after the bombings. The harrowing, almost unspeakable words of the *White Road/Black Rain Suite for Improvisers* were sung by Lee, with whom Waldron had already made a remarkable duo album of standards, *After Hours*. It was one of their last performances together: She died in 2000, at 61; he died two years later, at 77.

Not since his work with Holiday had Waldron formed such a close partnership with a singer. An heir of both Holiday and Abbey Lincoln, Lee was the finest singer to emerge from the ranks of the free-jazz movement; she had performed with everyone from Archie Shepp to John Cage, and spent much of her career as an expatriate. Like Waldron, she was a blues modernist, steeped both in African-American tradition and in contemporary new music. She understood, too, that concert music is always theater, and she and Waldron brilliantly evoked the terror of the bombings, much as he and Holiday had once evoked the terror of lynching in "Strange Fruit."

Perhaps the most striking words that Lee sings on *Travellin' in Soul-Time*, however, belong to Waldron himself, in a vocal setting of his song "Seagulls of Kristiansund." He imagines the birds diving into the sea from the sky, "so near, yet so high":

> They're wond'rously free
> They live happily.
> They know from the past,
> a life cannot last,
> So they live for today
> for tomorrow they may not
> Be able to dive from the sky.

The birds know what Waldron had to learn from his near-death experience. Lee

bends and stretches his words with warm, melismatic accents, at one point mimicking the sounds of seagulls. And as she sings to Waldron, one feels as if the lyrics had always been there; the story they tell is as much a self-portrait as a tone poem about a flock of seagulls. Freedom and flight were the themes that gave shape to Waldron's style after his breakdown. An ecstatic minimalism, it spoke of survival, rebirth, and the longing for transcendence. Its means were simple, but the stakes were not. Through his hypnotic repetitions, Waldron chased down that single, elusive note, as if his life depended on it. ■

An 1861 map depicting Gen. Winfield Scott's planned blockade of the South.

THE IMPENDING CRISIS

Omar El Akkad's debut novel imagines a future America riven by civil war

by MADISON SMARTT BELL

During the last few election seasons, I've amused myself by studying the color-coded zones of the electoral map and trying to figure out a feasible way for the blue states to part from the reds. The blues would retain the east and west coasts and their cultural capitals; the reds could keep the Mississippi River and have their ports on the Gulf of Mexico. When my daughter points out that there would still be a need for an east-west land corridor, I reply that we (the blues, that is) could easily annex Canada.

American War
By Omar El Akkad
Knopf. 352 pp. $26.95

But I also have roots in the red states, since I was born and raised in rural Tennessee and, as a Southerner, I am hardwired to remember that secession leads to civil war. The American Civil War of the 1860s passed out of living memory when I was a child, after the 1960s civil-rights struggle, which in its turn helped us all remember that white Southerners had lost that war and that black Southerners—most of them slaves at the time—hadn't exactly won in the aftermath, although the conditions of their lives improved at least a little. I was raised on the truism that wars are remembered by people who lose them. In my own and my daughter's generations, those memories are atavistic, but I'll still say it anyway: People with no memory of civil war don't fear it nearly enough.

A debut novel by the Canadian journalist Omar El Akkad offers us a glimpse of what a second civil war might look like in America when the blue North and the red South find themselves again caught up in a bloody conflict. *American War* takes its epigraph from *Kitab al-Aghani*, a book of Arabic songs and poetry: "He who deserves punishment at your hands is the man who brings injury upon you." This verse, drawn from the Arabic literary tradition, perfectly captures the Old Testament flavor of this novel: an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth, and an eye for the eye taken for an eye and a tooth for the tooth taken for a tooth, until the original injuries have been completely obscured by fresher ones. The title is a bit of a double entendre: What happens in the novel is a civil war, but one in which the Disunited States of America brings the nastiest tactics of its foreign and proxy wars home to inflict on its own people.

American War opens with an unnamed narrator who is tasked in the beginning with laying out the grand panorama of the war between the Reds and the Blues, which lasts from 2074 to 2093, and with producing a sort of synthesis to conclude the book. On the eve of this new civil war, many of the dire consequences of global warming have come to pass: Various US coastal cities are now submerged, and the national capital has been moved to Columbus, Ohio. The South secedes from the North again, this time not because of slavery, but because of its addiction to fossil fuel. El Akkad has a background as a war reporter, and this second American civil war has the style of partisan conflicts all over the world (where in excess of 40 armed conflicts are going on right now). Somewhat unexpectedly, this fictional war has no religious, ethnic, or racial dimension, but is driven entirely by regional and nationalist impulses.

The exchange of atrocities is interminable and imaginative, ranging from the president's assassination by a Southern suicide bomber, Julia Templestowe, to the release of a germ agent that turns the whole population of South Carolina (now immured inside a quarantine wall) into the equivalent of

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Parkinson's patients. In a flourish of surreal black humor, a Northern-controlled fleet of solar-powered drones has gone rogue following the rebels' destruction of its servers, and the drones fly perpetually over the South, dropping ordnance at random. Such dark comedy notwithstanding, the horrors of the war are viscerally portrayed, and they continue until 2093. The South, where most of the action takes place, has been lacerated by defeats the rebels refuse to accept, a situation worsened by local factionalism and a high rate of internal displacement.

Against this background, we're introduced to the Chestnut family: Martina and Benjamin and their children Simon, Dana, and Sarat. Their home is a metal shipping container on the shore of what's now called the Mississippi Sea, in an area known as the Purple, a semi-neutral zone. Benjamin is desperate to move the family north, where there's employment and a chance at a better life, but he is killed in a terrorist attack while seeking a travel permit. When the war invades their part of the Purple, Martina flees with her children to a refugee camp called Patience in northern Mississippi, an area that is now a fortified battle line between the Red and Blue states.

Martina gets by as a sort of fixer at the camp, while the Chestnut children finish growing up there as best they can. Like many of the characters, they're a racially indeterminate bunch: Sometime before 2074, an explosion of racial and ethnic mixing seems to have occurred (the fear of which, in real life, has been a factor in bringing a white-power movement to dominate the US government). Dana is a fair-haired beauty, a sort of starlet of the camp; her fraternal twin, Sarat, is a tomboy who rapidly grows larger and plainer, even as she emerges as the story's main protagonist; their brother Simon eventually joins a guerrilla group, the Virginia Cavaliers. Sarat's boldness in accepting dares attracts the attention of Albert Gaines, a person of obscure but privileged status, whose courtliness and resources seem derived from the prewar era and who takes Sarat under his wing.

Gaines educates Sarat, or rather trains her, and in return she runs clandestine errands for him in different sectors of the camp. He "fed her the old mythology of her people" and "taught her about the first time the North had torn her country to shreds." He explains the spirit of eternal war to her: "You pick up a gun and fight for something, you best never change your mind. Right or wrong, you own your cause and you never, ever, change your mind." He gives her a clasp knife and a whetstone to sharpen it: "All it takes is resistance and stress." Without revealing his purpose, Gaines is developing Sarat as an assassin, operating on the principle that there's "no soldier as efficient, as coldly unburdened by fear, as a child broken early."

Sarat's training pays off when Blue militias slip across the border to massacre the refugees in Patience. Martina is slain and Simon seriously wounded, but Sarat manages to hide herself and Dana and even finds an opportunity to exact some revenge: As the militia members withdraw, she slits the throat of one with her knife.

In the wake of this massacre, and for reasons never entirely explained by El Akkad, conditions for the surviving Chestnuts improve. Dana, Sarat, and Simon, who has been made simple by his head wound, fetch up in a reasonably comfortable tract house in Georgia, on the bank of the Savannah. There's even a nurse named Karina Chowdhury to care for Simon, around whom an odd little cult has developed. Simon's status as a living martyr earns the Chestnuts some sponsorship from "the Free Southern State," but the household runs primarily on the subsidies from one of Gaines's friends, a man named Joe from the Bouazizi Empire—a nation composed of many of the old Middle Eastern states, which is fanning the flames of the American conflict. Joe furnishes Sarat with a sniper rifle, which she nicknames "Templestowe," after the presidential assassin, and with it she kills a prominent Blue general, derailing a peace process that seemed to be nearing a successful conclusion.

Sarat is arrested, although not for the assassination, and sent to Sugarloaf, a Guantánamo-like prison on a desolate island in the Florida Sea. Since she's been connected to no particular crime, the elaborate tortures inflicted on her seem supremely pointless. Eventually, Sarat breaks under waterboarding and confesses to a series of actions—some of which she's actually committed, others not—before being just as pointlessly released and returned to her Georgia home. Sarat's former handlers aren't quite done with her yet, though: They give her an opportunity to retaliate against a sadistic Sugarloaf guard (she does) as well as Gaines, who has betrayed her (she doesn't). Finally, on the eve of a permanent peace settlement dubbed the Reunification, Sarat is armed by another agent of the Bouazizi Empire with a new germ agent and heads north to release it, killing herself and, over the next decade, about 100 million other people.

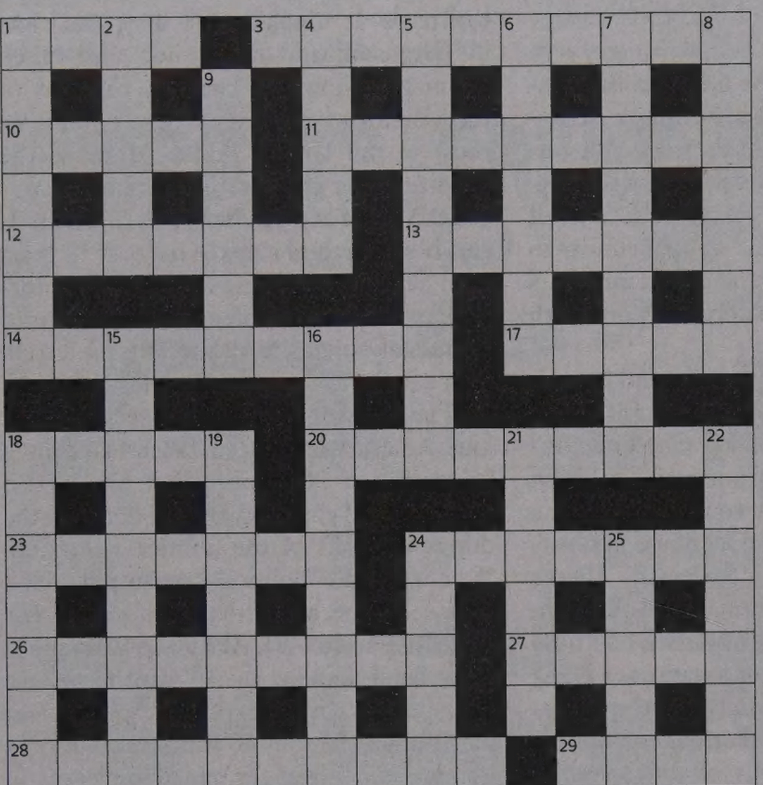
A Canadian citizen born in Cairo and raised in Qatar, El Akkad is as international a person as they come. Having reported on the war in Afghanistan, the revolution in Egypt, the trials at Guantánamo Bay, the riots in Ferguson, and more, he's well-suited to imagine how the headless chickens of the war-torn world might come home to roost in the United States. Many of the conditions for civil war have existed in this country since at least *Bush v. Gore*. The red-and-blue electoral maps of the past 17 years have demonstrated that half of the electorate fervently, if not violently, desires a world completely opposite to the one preferred, with equally fierce ardor, by the other half.

The growing tensions between red and blue America have been exacerbated by a balkanization of opinion that has eroded practically all common ground between the different flanks of the political spectrum. If or when our political system fails—and a case can be made that the process has already started—El Akkad's story might cease being fiction. We all want to believe that another civil war can't happen here, but it might be folly to think so. Not only is there enough anger and divisiveness in our country, but there is also plenty of matériel: a military and a militarized police force, either or both of which might stop responding to their ostensible masters, plus the most heavily armed civilian population on the planet.

At *American War*'s end, the narrator who opens the novel tells us a little about himself: He is the son of Simon and Karina, and he assures us that the long, bitter war that we've been following for the last several hundred pages is over. But there's a lacuna here: Neither the narrator nor his creator ever tells us how the war ended. Maybe there just weren't enough healthy people to keep fighting after the devastating germ attack that Sarat unleashed on the North. What we do know is that, had it been left to her, the violence would have gone on forever. Gaines has nurtured such a state in her that, toward the end of her training, Sarat volunteers this statement: "Stop talking about them.... I don't wanna hear about them anymore. I don't wanna read about them or memorize their capitals or learn how they did us wrong... I want to kill them." This unthinking, bloodthirsty intransigence, forged in the fires of suffering and the rage of civil war, is the novel's most memorable element, and it underscores what the narrator tells us early in the book: "This isn't a story about war. It's about ruin." ■

Puzzle No. 3438

JOSHUA KOSMAN AND HENRI PICCIOTTO



ACROSS

1 Child received a bit of discipline in person (4)

3 Faculty member with sampling of investment chart is bringing in 21 (10)

10 Consumption in American century? (5)

11 President assuming prison will produce someone helpful in assembling a cabinet (9)

12 Organization to help the needy? Burn it before day's end (7)

13 Without a tail, the best cat recoils, getting touchy? (7)

14 Note: central banks breaking up, intended to get another loan (9)

17 Moderates rents after the first (5)

18 Celebrate breakfast with eggs, initially (5)

20 Writing carelessly about stomach heave (9)

23 Congratulatory message from a long-suffering inhabitant of the French Riviera? (4,3)

24 Take up residence outside a city (7)

26 Bite hazelnuts for queen (9)

27 Footpath starting to turn in front of fence (5)

28 River that female boatbuilder's embracing, also (10)

29 Norm is not nice (4)

DOWN

1 Nightclub employee is a lightweight in bedroom (7)

2 Play dice, at first, with God (5)

4 Wobbly boxer (5)

5 What you might use to move slowly in terror, while eating fried grits (5,4)

6 Sweet stuff from Electra, after tragic development (7)

7 Meddler, though, can slide downhill (9)

8 They get a paycheck from leaderless students (7)

9 Plan with Lucy's husband on the outskirts of Galveston (6)

15 Farm's ironclad right to vote (9)

16 Sudden flood of French-German river's operating in a northbound direction (9)

18 Punishers nabbing last of record-keepers? (7)

19 Mexican city substituting piece of tin for damage in pot (7)

21 Break the law to make money (6)

22 Mischievous creature's smile involving slippery elm (7)

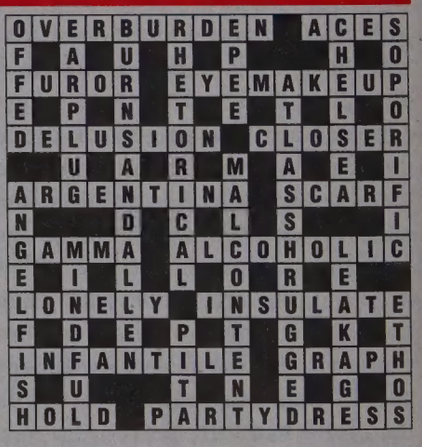
24 Mensch wants content that is not stressed (5)

25 Contrarian entrepreneur's beginning to run business (5)

SOLUTION TO PUZZLE NO. 3437

ACROSS 1 O(VERB)UR + DEN
6 AC[c]ES[s] 9 "Fuehrer" 10 "I may cup" 12 anag. 13 C + LOSER
15 AR(GENT)INA (*a rain* anag.)
16 2 defs. 17 hidden 19 ALCO(H)OLIC (*cocoa I'll* anag.) 21 [co]LONEL + Y
22 INSUL(A)T + E 25 IN + F(ANT)ILE
26 G + RAP + H 27 H + OLD
28 P(ARTY + D)RESS

DOWN 1 "oft" 2 EARP + LUG 3 BURN + SANDAL + LEN[t] 4 anag. 5 E + PEE
7 CHE + LSEA (anag.) 8 anag.
11 AT LAS[t] + SH + RUGGED
14 MALC ON (rev.) + TENT
15 ANG + ELFISH 18 M + I(N)DFUL (*fluid* anag.) 20 LEAK (anag.) AGE
23 hidden 24 PIT + A



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How To: Get Rid Of Deep Belly Fat

Researchers have announced a radical technique that not only fights potentially belly fat, but can also lead to slimmer waists, and perhaps improved health.

The only catch? The establishment wants to spend 5 years – and $65 million – testing this technology.

But one doctor thinks that the technology is so effective, it is immoral to make people wait.

So he's offering a version of the technique…now.

"The science has already been tested, and it's effective," says Dr. Rand McClain, Chief Medical Officer at Live Cell Research. "I can't make people wait 5 years for something that could be helping them today."

McClain is referring to a field of health research that is said to activate a "master switch" inside your body's cells.

This switch controls when your cells store fat, and when they convert the fat into energy.

Control the "master switch," the theory goes, and you also control fat.

To researchers, this is far more than just an appearance issue. It could be even more important to Americans who mistakenly believe that small amounts of exercise can radically change their bodies.

According to Dr. Todd Miller, professor in the Department of Exercise Science at George Washington University, "People don't understand that it is very difficult to exercise enough to lose weight. If that is why you are doing it, you are going to fail."

So a way to battle belly fat could be the breakthrough the health community has been waiting for. McClain feels the technique works best for people over 30, particularly those who may be experiencing excessive fatigue, weaker bodies, and even foggy thinking. Best of all, McClain announced that he is making his method available – and affordable – to virtually all Americans.

With demand already high for his stunning technique, McClain created an online presentation detailing how the health breakthrough works.

You can watch the presentation here at **www.NoFat17.com**

In this video, Rand is telling it like it is...we need more doctors like this!

People should be advised to watch the entire video report before committing to such an unconventional method.

Watch the video at **www.NoFat17.com**

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